



WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY

IMPACT REPORT 2025

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Front cover photo:
The Governor-General of Australia, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC, and His Excellency Mr Simeon Beckett SC — joint Patrons of Western’s Indigenous Centre of Excellence.

This page: Parramatta South campus

ABOUT WESTERN

Western Sydney University is a world-class university with growing international reach and a reputation for academic excellence and impact-driven research.

In the recently released Times Higher Education Sustainability Impact Ratings, Western placed third in the world reinforcing its ongoing dedication to driving positive community impact.

The University was one of just two Australian universities to place in the top 10, and the only one from New South Wales.

The prestigious Times Higher Education Sustainability Impact Ratings measure more than 1,600 universities around the world on their actions to protect the planet for future generations, reduce inequalities, deliver quality education, and ultimately make the world a better place for all.

Our University has over 46,000 students spread across 13 campuses and offers more than 600 courses across 100 disciplinary areas, carefully structured to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world, as well as the opportunities and challenges that are unique to our region. We are committed to the success of our students, the impact of our research and the co-created transformation of our communities.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHANCELLOR

Professor Jennifer Westacott AC

After another year of delivering student success, impactful research and memorable events championing philanthropy at Western Sydney University, I'm proud to present the **2025 Impact Report**.

I invite you to enjoy this celebration of the impact of philanthropy at Western, which is made possible by the generosity of our supporters. The report showcases how we live our purpose at Western to deliver positive impact. It underpins everything we do and I'm proud of the positive impact we make to support our students, researchers, and communities to reach their potential.

In 2025, Western welcomed supporters, partners and friends to our inaugural 'Evening with the Chancellor' at the Peter Shergold Building in Parramatta CBD. Celebrating the theme Spirit of Western, the evening honoured the commitment of our donor community, including Dr Roy Medich OAM, who received the Spirit of Western recognition for his philanthropic contribution to the University. The successful event will become a fixture on our annual calendar.

Western's School of Law celebrated 30 years of excellence in 2025, with a gala night held at the Parramatta Town Hall in July. Guests included former High Court Judges Virginia Bell AC and Michael Kirby AC CMG. To mark its enormous contribution in educating the next generation of talented legal professionals, the School of Law's 30-year anniversary scholarship fund was launched on the night.

Golf lovers joined us in November for our yearly Chancellor's Golf Day. Held at the picturesque Lakeside Golf Club in Camden, supporters teamed up to enjoy a round of golf and lunch. The event, which goes from strength to strength, raised a record \$120,000 for the University's Badanami Futures Fund. This has funded vital packages to help Indigenous students overcome practical barriers, stay enrolled and succeed at Western.

The Badanami Centre is an Indigenous-led space ensuring the success of the 1000 Indigenous students at Western.

This year's report also highlights philanthropy's role in enabling research that responds to real-world challenges, from early childhood support and mental fitness to precision science, gut health and community-led conservation. Together, these stories show how donor support helps turn knowledge into practical change for Western Sydney and beyond.

And last year, the University was privileged to receive a generous \$1.25 million bequest from the late Anthony Cowley – the largest gift in will ever left to the University in our history. This significant bequest represents an enduring legacy for the Cowley family that will provide meaningful support for research and future generations of students at Western Sydney University. It will help establish endowed scholarships, ensuring perpetual support for students studying accounting and medicine.

I invite you to read these stories and more, in the knowledge that the support of people like you helps make this all possible.

Thank you for your ongoing kindness and generosity, which continues to change students' lives, strengthen our communities and support research with lasting impact.



MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

Distinguished Professor George Williams AO

I'm delighted to share the **2025 Impact Report**, celebrating another year of achievement at Western Sydney University - made possible through the generous philanthropic support of people like you.

This report shares highlights including an exploration of the upcoming Indigenous Centre of Excellence, an extraordinary place where culture, knowledge and community will meet. This Centre will be located on Darug Country at our Parramatta South campus. We are grateful for the support of the NSW Government and the broader community for supporting this transformational project, including the more than 20 Indigenous Centre of Excellence Ambassadors who are backing the project.

This year, Western reached the significant milestone of enrolling 1,000 Indigenous students and counting – the first university in Sydney to reach this achievement. At Western, leading Indigenous acceleration is in our DNA and we continue to focus on expanding access, participation and success across all levels of study and research.

We are also pleased to feature an in-depth interview with our much loved former Deputy Chancellor, Liz Dibbs. Liz, who has supported 11 scholarships at Western since 2016, reflects on why donors are motivated to establish scholarships for Western students, and how deeply rewarding the experience can be.

Our edition also examines student success by looking at our talented Solar Car team, whose motto is 'Eat. Sleep. Solar Car. Repeat'. In 2025, students again competed in the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge, racing through the desert from Darwin to Adelaide, placing sixth. Excitingly, a mini feature film following the team's journey was recently screened at NSW Parliament House.

We've also written about vital research into iconic Australian wildlife, highlighting two projects. The first is WomSat (Wombat Survey and Analysis Tool) project led by Associate Professor Julie Old, in which community members record wombat and burrow sightings online in a bid to help combat mange. The second is the Platypus Project led by Dr. Michelle Ryan, whose current research focuses on waterways, researching platypus, freshwater turtles, and macroinvertebrates, is another fascinating glimpse into the research taking place at Western.

I hope you enjoy reading about the achievements of the University's students, researchers and staff, that your kindness makes possible.

On behalf of the Western community, thank you, as always, for your generous support.



STAFF GIVING

in 2025

333 

staff gave a donation through payroll

Staff donated through payroll

\$156,681

to scholarships, prizes and student support



\$62,964

to charity partners



IMPACT OF DONOR GIVING

in 2025



180

donor funded scholarships were awarded to students in a variety of categories including donor funded, Indigenous, equity, humanitarian and high potential.



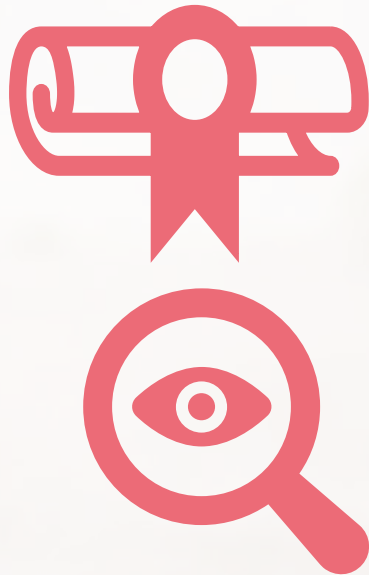
DONORS



Close to **600** donors gave

\$20,500,000

to a number of different areas including prizes, projects and programs, scholarships and research.



WALKING TOGETHER: THE INDIGENOUS CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

On Darug Country at the Parramatta South campus, Western Sydney University is building a landmark Indigenous Centre of Excellence (ICoE) — a dynamic place where culture, knowledge and community intersect, and where Indigenous leadership will set a national benchmark for higher education and research. In 2025, the Centre's significance was affirmed when Her Excellency the Hon Ms Sam Mostyn AC, Governor General of Australia, and His Excellency

Mr Simeon Beckett SC accepted invitations to serve as joint Patrons, underscoring a vision for a hub that celebrates Indigenous heritage, fosters understanding and promotes resilience across generations. Their patronage will help amplify this work and share its stories with the nation, with future ceremonies and milestones to be officiated by our Patrons.

Guided by Country, the ICoE's design brings to life a connected

precinct: state-of-the-art theatre and cinema, exhibition galleries and studios, teaching and a Social Enterprise café, together with generous outdoor areas planted entirely with Indigenous species. Foundational public investment has catalysed momentum, including NSW Government WestInvest support, positioning the Centre to connect people and place, and inviting philanthropy to build out scholarships, programs and research with lasting impact.

This movement is powered by a growing community. Western Sydney University's 2026-2030 Indigenous Strategy builds on strong momentum in Indigenous student participation, with 1,000 students enrolled and a continued focus on expanding access, participation and success across all disciplines and levels of study. The Strategy also targets stronger outcomes for students, including lifting Indigenous student retention to 78 per cent, from a baseline of 66 per cent, and aims for Indigenous participation to reach 3.2 per cent of all enrolled domestic students, including 3.2 per cent of all domestic higher degree research students.

Indigenous staff growth is also a core focus. Western's Strategy commits to building a vibrant Indigenous workforce with at least 120 ongoing and fixed-term academic and professional staff, strengthening leadership, visibility and cultural authority across the University. Key workforce measures include lifting Indigenous representation to 3.8 per cent of all ongoing and fixed-term staff, and increasing the number of Indigenous academics from 27 to 45. These outcomes are supported by the Badanami Centre for Indigenous

Education and purpose-built pathways such as the Pathways to Dreaming program, which introduces students to university in a culturally safe environment, with tailored support and strong connection to Country. Donor partnership accelerates these pathways, turning aspiration into achievement.

In 2025, Western celebrated historic milestones that speak to the Centre's purpose. 138 Indigenous students graduated during the year, including four Indigenous scholars who received their PhDs in the October ceremonies, the University's highest number of Indigenous doctoral graduations in one year, contributing to national efforts to grow Indigenous research leadership. Additionally, at the final graduation ceremony for 2025, eight Indigenous students completed the Bachelor of Medicine, the largest annual Indigenous medical cohort in Western's history, bringing culture, knowledge and community-centred care into the health system.

Philanthropy is central to realising the ICoE's full vision. Led by Dr Roy Medich OAM, the Medich Foundation is the founding donor of the Centre having made a \$5 million gift to

strengthen Indigenous arts, culture, and education in Western Sydney.

Equally vital are our Ambassadors, whose advocacy and guidance will help build a national exemplar for Indigenous education and leadership. We are proud these nationally recognised leaders are our ICoE Ambassadors: Mr Adam Goodes, Professor Anita Heiss AM, Professor Anna Cody, Emeritus Professor Barney Glover AO, Ms Casey Donovan, Ms Charlene Davison, Mr Corey Tutt OAM, Uncle Harry Allie AM BEM, Mr Jahin Tanvir, Mr Luke Carroll, Mr Michael O'Loughlin, Auntie Rasme Prior, Auntie Rayna St Julian, Auntie Ros Fogg OAM, Auntie Terri Keating, and Mr Tony McAvoy SC.

With distinguished joint Patrons, Ambassadors, founding philanthropic leadership and a clear vision grounded in self-determination, the Western community can help realise a once-in-a-generation opportunity: a Centre where Indigenous excellence leads with enduring impact across generations.

SCHOOL OF LAW 30TH ANNIVERSARY

In 2025, the School of Law celebrated its 30th anniversary. 2025 was also Western Sydney University's 'Year of the Student'. It was appropriate, therefore, that the School of Law's milestone year was dedicated to acknowledging the success and impact of our many outstanding law graduates – and finding new ways to support the incredible students studying with us today and into the future. School of Law Dean, Professor Catherine Renshaw takes us through the year that was.

It has been a privilege to serve as Dean during this landmark period and to build upon the legacy of those who have shaped the School of Law before me. I am immensely proud to lead a law school recognised for its excellence in teaching, research and community engagement. Over three decades, our talented staff have educated thousands of graduates who now contribute meaningfully to the legal profession and to communities across Western Sydney and beyond. Increasingly, our alumni are stepping into senior roles as partners in law firms, leading barristers and magistrates, and are known for their capability, determination and practical orientation.

My vision for the School of Law's future is grounded in our strengths: excellence in teaching and research, deep engagement with the legal profession, a commitment to practical experience, and a student cohort whose diversity enriches the profession. At the same time, we recognise the challenges ahead: rapid technological change (including the rise of AI), shifting expectations of legal education, and the financial, family and societal pressures faced by many of our students. We are actively developing policies, procedures and innovations to ensure we remain responsive, relevant and future focused while celebrating the success of our alumni over the past 30 years.

School of Law 30 Year Anniversary Gala Event

On 24 July, at a Gala Event at Parramatta Town Hall, we launched the 30 Year Anniversary Scholarship Fund. Among the many notable guests were two former Judges of the High Court, Virginia Bell AC and Michael Kirby AC CMG; WSU Chancellor, Professor Jennifer Westacott AC; Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Professor George Williams AO; Dr Hugh McDermott MP; and Law School alum Mr David Saliba MP. Judge Imad Abdul-Karim, who in 2025 was the first Western law graduate to be appointed a Judge in the District Court, was one of the many speakers who praised the Law School's commitment to expanding participation in the legal profession.

Long-term supporters of the School such as Bartier Perry Lawyers and Brydens Lawyers, were recognised for their generous contributions to our law students' success. Partners of prominent Western Sydney law firms like Turner Freeman Lawyers and Marsdens Law Group, who are proud employers of Western law graduates, were also in attendance. The most important guests, of course, were the students, past and present. At Western, we are proud that our Law School reflects the community we serve. Close to 4% of our students are Indigenous and 35% are from culturally and

linguistically diverse backgrounds, speaking a language other than English at home. Most are the first in their family to attend university.

Inaugural Sir James Martin Moot between Western Sydney University School of Law and Sydney Law School

It was wonderful, in our 30th anniversary year, to launch a major new event: an annual moot between students from the oldest law school in Australia, Sydney Law School, and students from the most diverse and dynamic law school in Australia, Western Sydney University's School of Law. We are very grateful to the Hon Andrew Bell, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, for conceiving the idea, agreeing to be one of the judges, and providing the facilities of the Banco Court as the venue. This event was proudly sponsored by MistryFallahi Lawyers with the firm's principals, Ehsan Fallahi and Bhavesh Mistry, being proud graduates of Western Sydney University's School of Law.

The moot is fittingly named after Sir James Martin (1820–1886). Sir James was Premier of NSW, Attorney-General and Chief Justice of NSW. Born in Ireland, he and his family relocated to Parramatta in 1821. After attending the Dame's School at Parramatta, he gained entry to Sydney College (now Sydney Grammar School), walking 20 km each day from Parramatta to

the city to attend school. As Premier, Sir James improved educational opportunities in NSW and supported the establishment of the University of Sydney. It is wonderful to recognise Sir James's connection to Parramatta, his contribution to the legal profession, and his commitment to public education, through a competition named in his honour.

7 Garfield Barwick Chambers supports the WSU Indigenous Law Scholarship and the Hon Brian Sully AM QC Memorial Scholarship

In 2025 and into 2026, the School of Law experienced record enrolments of Indigenous students. This is fantastic news, because the legal profession is still dramatically underrepresented in terms of Indigenous solicitors, barristers and judicial officers. It is vital, however, that Indigenous students are provided with the support they need to succeed. One of the School of Law's most successful and generous alumni, barrister Sebastian

de Brennan, organised a major fundraising event in October in partnership with 7 Garfield Barwick Chambers – a day-long Continuing Professional Development conference with all proceeds going to the Indigenous Scholarship fund and the Hon Brian Sully AM QC Memorial Scholarship. Among the many extraordinary speakers was the Hon Justice Lincoln Crowley of the Supreme Court of Queensland and the first First Nations lawyer to be appointed to a superior court in Australia; the Hon Geoffrey Bellew SC; the Hon John Hatzistergos AM, Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and former NSW Attorney General; the Hon Justice Paul McGuire; His Honour Magistrate Glenn Walsh; Richard Wilson SC; Patrick Griffin SC, Head of Floor at 7GBC; and Michelle England SC.

The successes we achieved in 2025 have laid foundations that will guide our School for many years to come.



The Honorable Justice Virginia Bell AC



School of Law staff, students and Dean - Professor Catherine Renshaw.



Chief People Officer at Bartier Perry, Nadine Cooper; Chancellor, Professor Jennifer Westacott AC; His Honour Judge Imad Abdul-Karim; Bartier Perry CEO, Riana Steyn; Sparke Helmore, Sydney Managing Partner, Renee Sadler; Dean of the School of Law, Professor Catherine Renshaw; Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, Solicitor, Gelareh Yousefi; Director of the Whitlam Institute, Professor John Juriansz; Office of Advancement Executive Director Christian Burden; Vice-Chancellor and President, Distinguished Professor George Williams AO.

LEAVING A FUTURE: A LEGACY THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Providing a gift in your Will is one of the most meaningful ways you can support Western Sydney University — often at a level that may not be possible during your lifetime. It is an opportunity to leave a lasting legacy, a gift in support of education that reflects your values and your belief in the power of education to change lives.

A bequest can open doors for future generations of students, educators and researchers. It can help create opportunities for people who might otherwise never have the chance to pursue tertiary education — enabling more prosperous, fulfilling lives and contributing to lasting social change across our region.

Your legacy can take many forms. You may choose to:

- support a scholarship that changes a student's life
- advance research and innovation across diverse fields
- help appoint world-class academics who inspire and mentor future leaders
- support Indigenous students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- recognise and reward high-achieving students
- grow the University's art collection and cultural assets
- contribute to new teaching and learning facilities that serve Western Sydney's growing communities.

Alternatively, you may prefer to make an untied gift, allowing the University to direct your generosity to the areas of greatest need as priorities evolve over time.

Established in 2016, the Leaving a Future Bequest Society now includes 45+ members who have pledged to support Western Sydney University through their Wills. Each member has their own story, motivations and hopes for the future — but they share a common belief in the transformative power of education.

Some of our members have generously agreed to share their stories, to inspire others to reflect on the legacy they wish to leave and the difference they can make for generations to come.

If you would like to explore how a gift in your Will could shape the future of Western Sydney University and our students, we would love to hear from you.

For a confidential discussion about including a gift in your Will or to learn about our Bequest Society, please contact Ross Newton at 02 9685 9892 or giving@westernsydney.edu.au

GLEN SANFORD

During my corporate career at Deloitte, I also had the pleasure, for nearly 20 years, of holding various governance roles on the Board of Trustees of Western Sydney University. The passion with which the Western Sydney University community went about their mandate to provide educational opportunities for those in Western Sydney was something I was always extremely proud of. All decisions were made with this mandate in mind. Education is the key to a prosperous future. Western Sydney University continues to go from strength to strength. It was a natural progression to provide a bequest to the University.

STEVE CLARKE

I have always been an advocate for accessible education, particularly for women, an aspiration my late daughter Dr Joanne Lind (an educator and researcher at Western) was passionate about.

Jo did a large amount of research into women's health, and she would be delighted that I am leaving a bequest to create a scholarship in her name for a female student who excels in Maths and Science. Jo herself was awarded prizes, grants and scholarships from late primary school onwards. As well as being a financial help it was extremely encouraging for the work and effort in her studies and research. I have no doubt this will be the same for future recipients of her scholarship.

I much appreciate the invitations to the annual Leaving a Future Bequest Society lunches. Keeping in touch with Western staff and hearing of the direction of the University and student achievements is of great interest. Talking to other donors is greatly encouraging and hearing their university experiences and connections can be compelling, particularly how technology has progressed. In my case, being involved in computing at university from February 1967 for 20 years!

FIONA CAMERON

As Associate Professor and Principal Research Fellow, Contemporary Museology at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University, I have been an academic staff member of the University for 21 years and I am committed to the University's mission around supporting engaged, impactful research addressing escalating, complex global challenges.

With this in mind, I wanted to ensure I would create impact that could support students in the future to address challenging problems.

I wanted to create a bequest that would provide PhD scholarships for students in an environment in which funding is becoming increasingly more difficult to secure. The areas I chose relate to my own work and learning, contemporary museology, the environmental humanities and climate change.

I wanted to create a legacy to support the next generation of academics to continue to develop these fields and generate impactful research that has the potential to contribute to sustainable futures.

It is important to make a bequest because it allows an individual or entity to have a substantial impact on causes that they care about without affecting your current financial security. It is a powerful form of legacy offering long-term support for charity, education or community.

KATHY MCCLELLAN

My decision to create a bequest to fund a scholarship came after I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to meet some Indonesian students who had come to Australia some 15 years ago. Having already completed a Bachelor of Nursing at university in Jakarta, they had come to complete a further 12 months of postgraduate nursing study with the understanding that this would facilitate working in the nursing profession in Australia. The reality was that their existing Bachelor of Nursing was not recognised by our Nursing Board. As they wished to stay in Australia, completion of a Bachelor of Nursing in Sydney was the best solution. One of the

students completed a Bachelor of Nursing at Western, graduating in December 2015.

After this student's graduation, I began to think about a scholarship to support future students from Asia, South Asia and the Pacific. I am very glad to have created a bequest that will fund a scholarship which recognises the circumstances of students who have come from overseas, with limited resources, but with the desire to give themselves and their families the opportunity to live and work in Australia.

Students who aspire to a career in nursing but may be prevented by financial disadvantage from undertaking further study will become a very valuable part of our community, given a chance to succeed. They will shine brightly throughout their careers as they really appreciate the opportunity to help others.

Now retired from ophthalmic practice and with time to reflect, I realise how fortunate I have been to have received a university education and to be able to pursue a fascinating career for more than 40 years. I can only encourage others to live as Mahatma Gandhi advocated "and be the change you wish to see in the world" and continue to support the futures of others.

RICHARD TAINSH

It has concerned me for some time that there were too many smart young people in Australia with the ability and desire to attend university but not the financial means.

We might be the lucky country, however I believe we should also be doing a lot more to make ourselves a smart country. Education is surely the key and I thought that if I could help just a few students undertake further education of their choice, that would be the most useful contribution I could make.

To me, Western Sydney University seemed like an obvious choice. Over the last 10 years or so, as I have learnt more about the University, I have been increasingly impressed with the work they are doing. The diversity of students, the number of courses on offer, the vibe on the campus, the stories of young students proud to be the first in their family to go to university have all left a marked impression.

These factors all helped make my decision to leave a bequest to support a scholarship an easy one. I would encourage others to think about what is important to them and how they could do their own small bit to support this endeavour.

DEBORAH RUIZ-WALL

For myself, the thought of leaving a bequest started with a wish to pass on a gift as a legacy to the next generation of those striving to gain a university education.

After obtaining my first Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communication from the University of the Philippines, I have been privileged to obtain further education in Australia in different fields such as Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Sociology from the University of Wollongong, Graduate Diploma in Education from Sydney Teachers College, Graduate Diploma in Ministry from the Sydney College of Divinity, Advanced Diploma in Applied Aboriginal Studies from Tranby Aboriginal Co-operative College, and lastly, Doctor of Philosophy from Western Sydney University.

I arrived in Australia in 1974 from the Philippines, a country which at that time was still under a dictatorship ruled by President Ferdinand E. Marcos. Social justice is a value that I adhere to as a vital component in government administration to secure stability, prosperity and cohesion in society. I see education as one of the means in developing critical thinking that has prospect in contributing to integrating Australian society.

In 2004, I was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) by the Australian Government for service to the community in the areas of social justice, multiculturalism and reconciliation. This acknowledgment represented the outcome of my social advocacy in helping achieve social justice values and goals through my articles published in the local press.

So many of my life experiences led me to think about how I could use them to support others, into the future. My thoughts led to the creation of a bequest to initiate a scholarship that will give the recipients the chance to do what may otherwise be an uphill battle for realising one's potential for self-development through education. I hope my bequest for a postgraduate scholarship at Western will support disadvantaged First Nations Australians, as well as Filipinos and other migrants, pursue higher education and inspire them to 'give back to community' in any field of work they choose. I chose Western as the conduit for my gift because it was the University where I obtained my PhD degree which gave me the opportunity to promote positive social values.

Effective governance by commerce and government needs to constitute the voice of the people and the community it represents. Education is vital for members of the wider community to understand and acknowledge Australia's total history so that no one is left behind due to lack of opportunities. Those with the capacity to support students' postgraduate education at Western through a bequest, I believe, will help in developing talents and interests in the fields of the students' choice. The nurturing of positive values through education is an important tool for integrating all members of Australian society. It is my hope that my story will inspire others to think about how they can also give back.

Scenes from the 2025 Bequest Society Lunch event, with guest speaker Dean of the School of Law, Professor Catherine Renshaw.



ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION OF STEM SCHOLARS

The partnership between AirTrunk and Western Sydney University, as part of AirTrunk's Social Impact Program, is helping to open new pathways for students from Greater Western Sydney to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Established through a generous \$90,000 donation in 2025, the inaugural AirTrunk STEM Scholarships support the company's commitment to creating opportunities for talented students from underrepresented backgrounds to access university education and build meaningful careers in high-growth technology sectors.

"At AirTrunk, we recognise that building a future-ready workforce isn't just about skills - it's about ensuring opportunities are accessible to people from all backgrounds. Through our partnership with Western Sydney University, we're creating pathways for talented young people from Western Sydney to pursue STEM careers and contribute to the industries of the future," said Rob Bartrop, Associate Vice President, Social Impact & Community at AirTrunk.

The scholarships will provide vital financial support for students commencing STEM degrees at Western Sydney University (valued at \$7,500 per year for up to three years) helping recipients focus on their studies while reducing the financial barriers. Preference will be given to students from the Greater Western Sydney region who demonstrate both academic potential and financial need, ensuring the program supports

those who may otherwise struggle to access higher education.

Beyond financial assistance, the partnership is also focused on building aspiration and awareness among high school students who may not yet see university as part of their future.

A key initiative supporting this vision is the STEM Immersion Day, delivered in collaboration with Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN) and Western Sydney University's Future Student Engagement team. The event brings high school students onto campus to experience what studying STEM at university could look like for them.

"We know that interest in STEM, and awareness of the opportunities it can lead to, needs to start early. By supporting young people as they begin to explore their future pathways in high school, we can help open their eyes to what's possible. We hope that this will help create a clearer path into further education and opportunities like our scholarship program with Western Sydney University," said Mr Bartrop.

During the immersion day, students participate in hands-on workshops, hear from University academics and industry professionals, and connect with current University students who share their own pathways into STEM study. For many participants, it is the first

time they have stepped onto a university campus or interacted directly with professionals working in technology and engineering fields. Experiences like these help demystify university life and demonstrate the diverse opportunities available through STEM careers.

"Partnerships like what we have created between AirTrunk and Western Sydney University remain vitally important to ongoing student success, industry connectivity and STEM career pathways for young people in Western Sydney and beyond. We are grateful to AirTrunk for their committed support to these important and impactful areas."

***Professor Alpha Possamai-Inesedy,
Pro Vice Chancellor,
Student Success,
Western Sydney University.***

BUILDING A MENTALLY FIT FUTURE: WESTERN AND Gotcha4Life

PREVENTION. PARTNERSHIP. PROOF.

In March 2025, Western Sydney University and not-for-profit foundation Gotcha4Life, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to bring a prevention-first approach to mental health in schools.

Together, we're scaling and rigorously evaluating the Mentally Fit Schools program — a multi-year partnership that helps schools take action to embed mental fitness across the whole school community. With a focus on prevention, the program supports students, staff and families through simple daily habits, consistent language and evidence-based tools that make a lasting difference. Schools are supported with ongoing coaching, resources and a dedicated Mental Fitness Educator.

For Gotcha4Life founder and mental fitness advocate Gus Worland, the imperative is urgent. "We can't keep waiting until crisis hits. We've got to start early." He's spoken with "tens of thousands of Aussies" since 2016 and too often hears, "I wish I'd spoken up earlier." The classroom is the launchpad: "School's where it all begins. It's the place where kids start building those bonds with their mates and figuring out if it's safe to open up when things get tough."

The goal is practical and lifelong: "If we can give them the chance to strengthen those emotional muscles, and bring the teachers and parents along too, then we're setting them up with skills they'll use for the rest of their lives."

That whole-community approach starts with educators. "We give them the chance to stop, breathe and talk about what they're going through. And you can just see the relief when they realise that they're not the only ones struggling." Families are central too: "They want the tools to handle the stress, the anxiety, the big conversations at home. So, we've built resources to help make that possible."

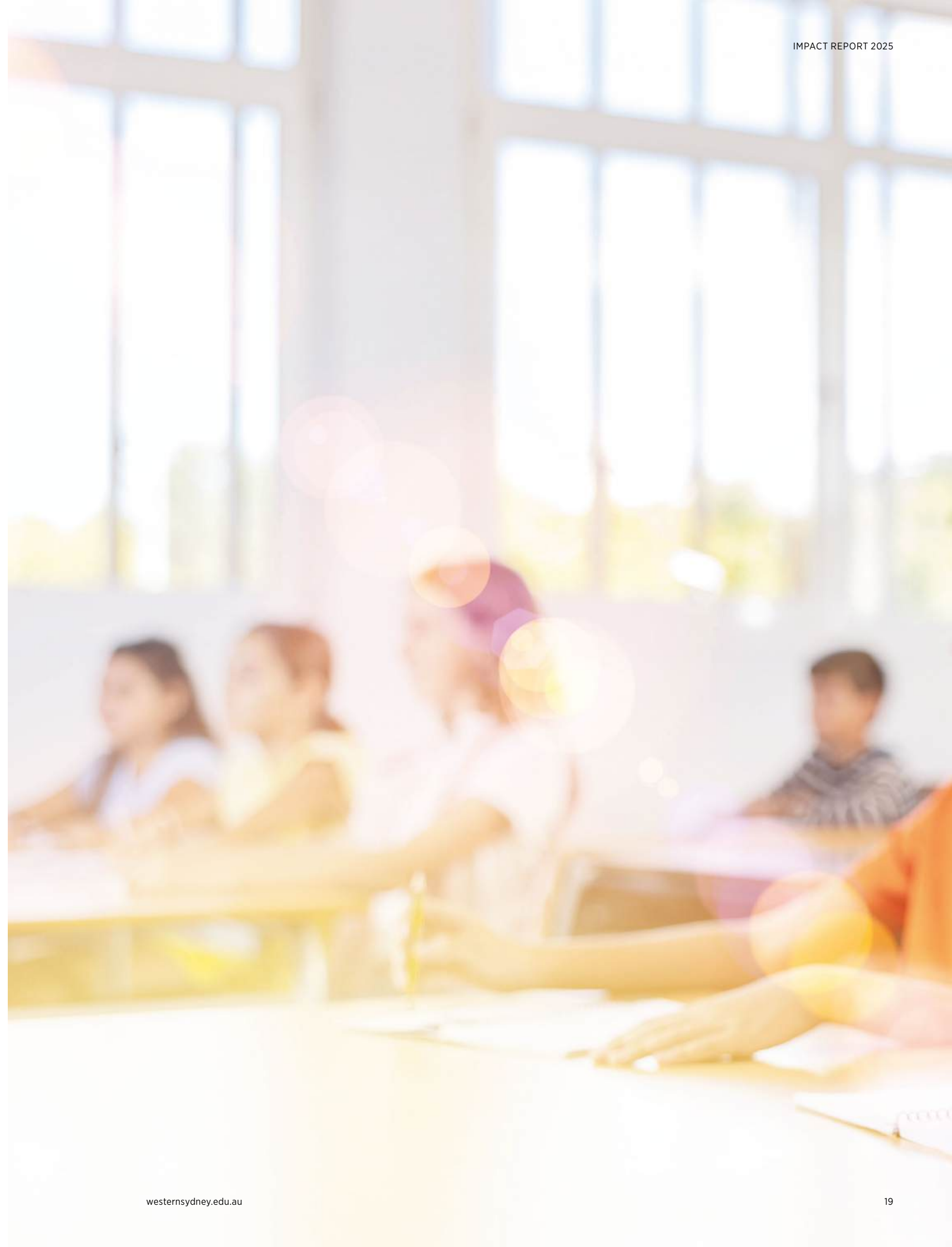
Western brings the research strength to match the movement. "Our collaboration will focus on measuring the program's outcomes, scalability and alignment with best practices... using data-driven insights to demonstrate the impact of the Mentally Fit Schools Program," says Professor Sarah Lewis, Executive Dean, Faculty of Health. In its first year, the program supported 1,991 students, educators and caregivers across NSW, and is informed by leading evidence, including CASEL's (The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) social

and emotional learning framework. "We're proud to partner with Western Sydney University to strengthen the impact of our Mentally Fit Schools Program," adds Gotcha4Life CEO Belinda Elworthy.

For Worland, the Western partnership is transformative. "This is a massive moment for Gotcha4Life. People want the evidence. And that's why this partnership with Western Sydney University is so exciting. It's our chance to prove that prevention works." His vision is bold and clear: "I want mental fitness to be part of the DNA of every school in Australia. Not a tick-box, not a once-a-year program, but something built into the way kids learn, the way teachers teach and the way families connect... If we can prove this model works, then mental fitness can become as normal as maths or sport."

Together, Western and Gotcha4Life are working to reach more classrooms, educators and families across our region to help ensure 'no one worries alone'.

Building mental fitness just got easier. Check: <https://www.gym.gotcha4life.org/app/>



SCHOLARSHIPS

THE PERERA FOUNDATION

Western Sydney University and Castle Group's charitable arm, the Perera Foundation have joined forces to strengthen pathways into the property sector and support greater representation across the industry.

This partnership brings together two scholarships introduced in 2025, designed to help celebrate diversity in future property professionals. The first provides financial support for eligible female students undertaking the Bachelor of Business (Property). The second supports students who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander across a range of business degrees, including Property.

According to the NSW Government's 2024 Women in Construction annual survey, women make up just 20 per cent of the construction industry, with even fewer in leadership positions. The scholarship was established to help shift that picture, with the inaugural award made in 2025.

Castle Group's CEO of Property and Western Sydney alumna Ranisha Clarke knows the gap firsthand.

"Women are underrepresented in the property sector and we want to help change that. This scholarship will help open the door for women seeking a career in property," she said.

"Western Sydney University helped pave the way for the career I have today, and I'm proud that we're partnering with the University to invest in the next generation of women leaders in property," Clarke added.

Castle Group is a founder-led, diversified group that invests in and delivers property, energy, digital infrastructure and hospitality projects and platforms that shape how communities live, connect and grow.

Professor Hind Benbya, Dean of the School of Business applauded Castle Group's Perera Foundation for this commendable initiative.

"The School's Property program, recognised as the top-ranking program in Australia and Oceania by EduRank, enjoys a stellar reputation within the property industry and has produced many notable alumni in the industry. It is crucial to maintain a robust talent pipeline for women in property management, making initiatives like this scholarship invaluable to the field," said Professor Benbya.

Professor Alpha Possamai-Inesedy, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Success at Western Sydney University, expressed gratitude to Castle Group's Perera Foundation for its generous support and commitment to empowering women in the property sector.

"Western Sydney University has a proud tradition of expanding access to higher education. This scholarship offers vital financial support that will empower women to succeed, both in their studies and in the property sector. By supporting more women

into the profession, we're helping to build a stronger, more diverse and future-focused property industry; one that reflects and supports the growing needs of Western Sydney," said Professor Possamai-Inesedy.

Castle Group Founder and Group CEO, Ritchie Perera, established the Perera Foundation in 2014 to support communities through strategic partnerships and initiatives.

"Education is a great enabler and can have a profound lasting impact on people's lives. More importantly, its reach extends beyond the classroom and helps shape the communities of tomorrow. That's why we see the value of these sponsorships, and we are proud to support Western Sydney University in this journey," said Mr Perera.



A LASTING LEGACY OF GENEROSITY



Ms Liz Dibbs

Liz Dibbs has worn many hats in her time at Western Sydney University - from Deputy Chancellor, donor and champion of students. Those who have had the privilege of being in Liz's orbit will know that she makes sure she walks the talk and is deeply connected to making real and impactful change. She first became involved at Western because of the University's deeply rooted commitment to its public purpose, pathways to higher education and community impact.

"I honestly believe there is no other university that is so embedded in the community and plays such an important role for students across the region and now beyond. It truly is an anchor institution. The research we do has meaning and impact and you can feel the connection and dedication of our academics and staff to our students and the mission of the University," she said.

Reflecting on her decade plus on the Board, Liz said it was a period of focus on our campus network, learning facilities and contributions

to Western Sydney's development and economic future as the third largest economy in Australia. It was also about growing Western's reputation to reflect the University's extraordinary work in teaching, learning and research. Alongside the Western Sydney Airport and other significant infrastructure investments made in Western Sydney, for which the University advocated, Western has played its own role in contributing to a network of learning and innovation spaces across Western Sydney, ensuring that our students and

academics have state-of-the-art facilities alongside our beautiful traditional campuses. This has also contributed significantly to the University's financial sustainability.

"I am really proud of the Western Growth Strategy that we put in place over ten years ago and have pursued with focus. The state-of-the-art vertical campuses we championed in Parramatta, Liverpool and Bankstown CBDs are not only exemplars that set the tone for these city centres but have also provided much better access for

our students and the communities we serve. I loved that families could arrange to pick up their children from our Liverpool campus in the city centre - the importance of having higher education institutions not only accessible but highly visible in our city centres cannot be understated. Western has also championed many important facilities across Western Sydney like the Innovation hubs at Westmead and Werrington, Launchpads for our start up community, a medical research institute and sports centre of excellence in Campbelltown, and world-class Agritech facilities in the Hawkesbury which will drive food security research into the future, to name just a few.

"During this time, we also launched the Unlimited brand strategy and changed our name

to Western Sydney University, really emphasising "Western Sydney" at the forefront. I'll never forget the day the video of alumnus Deng Adut (child soldier to human rights lawyer) went viral. This strategy also showcased the enormous achievements of our graduates like Jay Manley at Tesla and Melissa Chiu, internationally renowned museum director in Washington DC. Unlimited represented what Western was about - opportunity, talent, hard work, grit and making a difference here and on a global scale."

Liz reflects how the University's international standing grew. "We began to think more strategically about our role in the wider ASEAN region building on the success of our partnership campuses in Vietnam and

Hong Kong. What I particularly loved about our international strategy is that it started with the premise of ensuring a positive and enriching experience for both our domestic and international students. We did not want to follow the strategies of other universities. I'm delighted that we also have now opened a campus in Surabaya. Our offshore campuses reflect the global reach of Western Sydney and the important role of Western in our region. This will really benefit our students, academics and the region into the future."

What mattered very deeply to Liz throughout all of this was the heart of the University - its welcoming and openness to all who were seeking the opportunity that higher education offers. "To be part of a university

that is purpose and values driven is something really special and I feel this differentiated Western and has made us distinctive. There are so many examples of this - our Indigenous Strategy which has not only grown and supported our Indigenous students but also importantly our senior academic and research leadership across the University; our support to refugee and migrant students ensuring that they have access to world-leading education; the exemplar Fairfield Hub ensuring that state-of-the-art facilities are available in all our communities across Western Sydney; our work on anti-racism; and our commitment to the environment and net zero. I could keep going.

“Perhaps given all of this it is no surprise that Western is the number one University in the world measured against the UN Sustainable Development Goals and has been for four years in a row. I really believe this is testament to the talent of our leaders, academics, students and staff and the University’s unwavering focus on its public purpose and societal impact.”

With a long career in law and business outside of university life, Liz has deep professional experience in working with young people embarking on their careers and has experienced firsthand the difference a scholarship can make.

“For me, it was so important for the University to start the philanthropic scholarship program over a decade ago and it was a no brainer to be part of it,” she said.

“My husband and I chose to support students in Business and Law as these were disciplines that had put us on the right track in life. Back then, I also wanted to support

and highlight the leadership of women in STEM and kicked off that scholarship.”

Liz said it has been incredibly rewarding to see her scholarship recipients achieve so much over the years.

“I was in Melbourne recently and caught up with one of the original scholarship recipients who is now very successful. After all these years we stay in touch and I have enjoyed following her career. I also love that the Scholarships team lets me know when any of my recipients are graduating. I had the enormous pleasure of presiding at the graduation of one of my first scholarship winners, each of us under Covid masks – what an unforgettable moment and what a photo.”

After over a decade of supporting scholarships, Liz is delighted to be launching six new scholarships in 2026, four across Law and Social Justice, celebrating the Law School’s 30th anniversary, and a scholarship in the Performing Arts.

“It has been fantastic to see our Western Creative Strategy come to fruition and the new Performing Arts degree take its place back at Western. It’s important that education in all of the creative arts is available and embedded in Western Sydney. To know that our performing arts program is back and part of Western’s creative arts offering is very exciting. I hope we will see the next generation of performers emerge, following in the footsteps of our alumni David Wenham, Yvonne Strahovski and Joel Edgerton.

“My goal has always been that students who receive a scholarship know they have been backed to

succeed. I hope that the scholarship enables them to spend more time enjoying university life, focusing on their learning and ensures they have the right technology to support them. I would really encourage donors to get involved with this program and make this very direct difference for our students.”

Liz said that her time at Western has been an incredible period in her life. She will never forget the wonderful graduations bringing families, friends and our University community together to celebrate our students as they graduate. “Graduating students has been one of the greatest honours and joys of my time with Western.”

“Western is a special place and, although my time on the Board has finished, I look forward to watching the University and our students continue on their Unlimited journeys. I have had the privilege to work with outstanding leaders, meet many extraordinary and talented people and to have made lifelong friends. This happens when you’ve been lucky enough to be part of Western Sydney University!”





Mr Ehsan Fallahi

FULL CIRCLE GIVING

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the School of Law at Western Sydney University, long term donors MistryFallahi Lawyers & Business Advisors are proud to have created a new opportunity for students to continue to gain real-world opportunity and experience.

Bearing the name of two Western alumni – Ehsan Fallahi and Bhavesh Mistry – the firm now serves clients across Australia and the world.

To honour the anniversary and entrench their commitment to students at Western, they have created the MistryFallahi Moot Cup, an opportunity for students to gain real-world experience in the Supreme Court of NSW.

Ehsan recalls his time at the then University of Western Sydney fondly and the experience of representing the University at a national moot competition before Justice Michael Kirby in the High Court of Australia as one of the highlights.

“Almost everyone I speak to, they recall moot as being one of their most challenging but memorable experiences in their studies,” he said.

“With Law, what you learn at the lecture theatre and what you practice at the office are two very different worlds and to be able to support the wonderful students who are capable of moot and interested in advocacy is so important and so rewarding for us personally and as a firm.”

“In fact, it really was a full circle moment recently,” he said.

“At the 30th anniversary event I saw the Hon Michael Kirby and had the chance to tell him that in my fourth year, I had the opportunity

to appear before him at the High Court in a moot competition and because of that experience - 20 odd years after the fact - I now found myself in a position to be able to give others that opportunity to have that same privilege that I had - a beautiful full circle moment.”

As to why it’s important to Ehsan to get involved in this way, he says ‘opportunity’ is the most important and impactful way to support the community and enrich the lives of others.

“Education remains one of the most fundamental ways to change lives because in my personal and professional experience education has the potential to pull people out of economic difficulties in the most profound way.”

The Moot Cup follows a number of years of MistryFallahi supporting student scholarships, another aspect of giving that is very important to Ehsan.

“We started our scholarship program in 2019 and we have had half a dozen or so students come through. Almost all of them have become admitted as solicitors in the Supreme Court of NSW and a number have gone on to bigger and better things which is so exciting,” he said.

“We know the financial contribution is important but the real benefit is the invaluable support we have provided students with during our internship program. On a daily basis, they have participated in client interviews, rigorous research to solve complex problems, attended court hearings and observed the reality of law rather than what they see in the classroom or on TV. It is really enriching for us to see these

young adults transform from shy students to confident members of the legal profession. It is really wonderfully rewarding for us.”

For Ehsan, it is important to give back to the community that he and many of his colleagues have come from, but also to ensure that students with diverse backgrounds have the chance and capacity to reach their full potential.

“We found ourselves in a privileged position as alumni of the University, so it is our way to give something back. I also think it is helpful for students to see people like myself and Bhavesh with similar backgrounds to them, who have attained a degree of professional achievement in their chosen field and to give them the insight that hard work and perseverance in the profession is a greater indicator of success than the place where one studies or the circumstances of where one comes from.

“Some students may still think it’s an uneven playing field but now, 30 years on, Western Sydney University’s reputation is very strong and the University is now punching well above its weight to produce excellent legal practitioners.

“The partners at MistryFallahi are all very keen to continue our support because it’s these experiences that shape the future trajectory of students and ensure the profession continues to have people from diverse backgrounds with a range of life experiences. This leads to a fairer, more just and more equitable society - with multiple voices with multiple experiences which is a greater representative of the fabric of society.”



CURTAIN UP: WESTERN AND ACA REVIVE WORLD-CLASS ACTING TRAINING IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Western Sydney University has partnered with the nationally acclaimed Actors Centre Australia (ACA), part of the MindChamps Group, to deliver the new Bachelor of Performing Arts (Acting), bringing elite, industry-led actor training back to Western Sydney after an 18-year hiatus. For nearly four decades, ACA has been shaping the next generation of performers through world-class actor training. This collaboration also builds on the legacy of Theatre Nepean and signals a long-term commitment to culture, creative careers, and the region's artistic economy.

The partnership began with a Memorandum of Understanding to revitalise performing arts education and create pathways that are both academically rigorous and industry-attuned. As Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Professor George Williams AO noted at the signing, this collaboration "reflects the University's commitment to

enrich the cultural fabric of Western Sydney and to provide students with exceptional education and career pathways." ACA's Chairman David Chiem underscored the ambition: "This partnership with Western will bring the highest global standards of arts education from Western Sydney to the world."

Momentum continued when ACA Patron and alumnus Hugh Jackman called the collaboration a "game changer" for Australian arts education: "Both of these institutions are powerhouses, but together they're going to create an educational environment for students to thrive, and they are going to enter the industry way above industry standards." The program is being delivered by Western's School of Arts at Kingswood, offering an immersive, conservatory-style experience designed with deep industry links.

Designed in collaboration with ACA, the degree blends studio practice with research-informed

learning, including 20 core subjects and four electives spanning stage and screen, voice and movement, with internships, mentorships and guest artist engagements to build real-world readiness. It integrates traditional acting craft with contemporary insights, equipping graduates to thrive across theatre, film, television and emerging media.

Crucially, the vision is now reality. The first cohort commenced in Semester 1, 2026: a milestone for Western's creative ecosystem and a significant win for talented students who can now access top-tier training without leaving the region.

For Western's donor community, this partnership is a model of impact through collaboration - University excellence and industry leadership unlocking opportunity, nurturing local talent, and strengthening the cultural life and economic vitality of Western Sydney.

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY IS GAINING MOMENTUM AS A FORCE TO WATCH IN THE WORLD OF SOLAR CAR DEVELOPMENT

Since its formation in 2011, Western's solar car team of 25 students has pushed the boundaries of engineering and manufacturing to build and race six cars in international events including the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge.

Distinguished Professor Brian Falzon, Executive Dean for the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Science believes the program has a number of key benefits for the University, students and the wider community - not only supporting innovation in engineering and manufacturing, but also the development of young people who think outside the box.

"Engineering innovation sits at the heart of solving humanity's most pressing challenges. By investing in projects like the solar car, we give talented young people the chance to apply what they learn, tackle real-world problems and develop creative, practical solutions," he said.

Western Sydney University, through the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Science, has been investing in developing a solar car team to rival some of the best in the world. However, this investment is costly in time and resources and requires a number of community and corporate partners to ensure the team can continue to compete.

According to Professor Falzon, the team have done fantastically well to be placed first in Australia and sixth in the world. He is confident that WSU students have the talent and commitment to pursue further breakthroughs and be placed in the top three.

"This, though, requires continued investment and it is critical that our dedicated sponsors keep getting behind us to support the work we do.

"We are incredibly grateful to the sponsors who have supported us, including Penrith City Council, Abergeldie, Phoenix Contact, Sydney Motor Sport Park and Click Media. We are still looking for additional support from others in the community and can offer some great benefits to those who want to become part of our team."

The Western Sydney University solar car team have proved their mettle on a number of occasions, most notably by competing in the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge - an international event where teams

aim to traverse the 3022 kilometers from Darwin to Adelaide using solar powered vehicles. This event puts the team's engineering efforts to the ultimate test as the cars must withstand the harsh Australian outback.

The team has had significant achievements over the years, placing sixth in the world in the 2017 challenge and winning the American Solar Car Challenge in 2018. When Covid hit in 2020 and the world closed down, the team continued working and developing the vehicle behind the scenes, enabling them to again race in 2023, where they were followed by a documentary team.

The documentary feature debuted in 2025, the same year that the 6th iteration of the car finished 6th in the Bridgestone event - their equal best finishing place and the top team in Australia.

Professor Falzon says that the team involved in the project are hugely dedicated, volunteering hundreds of hours each year.



“Their dedication cannot be faulted, however it does also have significant benefits for those who get involved as it makes them hugely more employable and often leads to connections with real-world partners and opportunities.”

One of the team’s highest profile alumni is Jay Manley, who was part of the original solar car team. After graduating from WSU, he went on to spend eight years at Tesla in California, before returning to Western Sydney to co-found MP Space who make scalable power systems for satellites. In a full circle moment, Jay recently employed Micah Honan, who is the current Electrical Lead of the solar car team.

“If we look beyond the solar car itself, these students are being shaped into the next generation of leaders in aerospace — now a major growth sector in Western Sydney — as well as advanced manufacturing and sustainable transport. None of this is pie-in-the-sky anymore: it’s happening here, now, and it’s grounded in the real, hands-on experience they gain at the University and through the solar car team.”

“Being involved in the solar car team has been excellent for industry connections. We have constant contact and interaction with our industry leading sponsors and partners, with the majority of team members going on to have very promising careers after the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge.”

SPONSORS

- Penrith City Council
- Abergeldie
- Phoenix Contact
- Sydney Motor Sport Park
- Click Media
- Revolution Software Services
- Nepean Business Park



WESTERN’S SOLAR CAR UNLIMITED 6.0 IN POLE POSITION TO CHASE THE SUN

For veteran solar car team member Micah Honan, Electrical Lead for UNLIMITED 6.0, 2025 was her second time competing in the world’s premier solar car event with the Western Sydney solar car team.

The Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical) student first joined the team in mid-2022 after seeing posters around campus which led her to taking part in the 2023 Bridgestone World Solar Challenge for the first time. “This year, it was about meeting others who are just as passionate about what they do. There are many solutions for a complicated problem, and everyone solves it a bit differently,” said Micah.

“I love learning how and why something works, or how and why it doesn’t. Engineering is not just a field of study, but a mindset.”

As the Electrical Lead for UNLIMITED 6.0, Micah was instrumental in designing and modularising the electrical systems of the solar car without compromising efficiency. Supporting her fellow teammates, Micah’s electrical expertise and leadership skills helped the team successfully address unique design challenges posed by this year’s event being held in winter for the first time, ensuring it can run efficiently with reduced sunlight.

“I’m proud that our team takes ownership of its direction and solves problems the way engineers do — through collaboration, iteration and disciplined design. The solar car project isn’t just a project; it’s a real engineering platform where theory meets constraint, and where future engineers learn to think critically, design rigorously, and deliver under pressure,” she said.

Meanwhile, Aaron Sharman, Mechanical Lead for UNLIMITED 6.0, is also a team veteran having first joined in 2021. Like Micah, this year was also Aaron’s second time competing in the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge with the Western Sydney solar car team.

As a Bachelor of Industrial Design (Honours) student, Aaron is the driving force responsible for the mechanical sector of the team,

helping prioritise systems and parts, and assisting with integration.

Drawing on his experience and leadership, Aaron developed a timeline and plan that kept the team on track to deliver a world-class competition vehicle.

“I am most proud of the skills our team have developed and the amazing work we have all accomplished together in such a compressed timeline. I’m very proud of the quality the team have been able to reach for UNLIMITED 6.0,” Aaron said.

“The best thing about studying at Western is that you are surrounded by a lot of people who aren’t afraid to get their hands dirty. All my friends, all my team members, they are all happy to chip in, they are always available.

“It’s this really great community of people that aren’t afraid to put in immense hours and work towards something that we are all incredibly passionate about.”

While Aaron and Micah are experienced competitors, this year’s Bridgestone World Solar Challenge introduced new elements to the event such as increasing the solar capacity of each solar car from four square metres to six, and moving the event to wintery August instead of October.

Aaron says that while these engineering challenges can change the dynamics of the event, the experience has been highly rewarding and a positive opportunity to be innovative and solve real-world design challenges, while preparing him for future employment.

“This year’s challenge has been very good for personal development and growth. It’s been fantastic to work in a team of likeminded individuals all striving towards the same goal,” he said.

“In my field of study, I am most passionate about how fast an idea can be turned into a working prototype using 3D printing. I am most excited to push our solar car to its full potential and see how it compares with our world-class competition.

This has proven true for both Aaron and Micah who are now entering the next phase of their careers. After the team’s massive success with UNLIMITED 6.0 in the 2025 Bridgestone World Solar Challenge, Aaron was contacted by Tesla and received an offer for a sponsored internship. He has since packed his bags and moved to Silicon Valley to push sustainability and innovation even further.

“I am a Technical Program Manager working on the Tesla semi-truck team managing development on the high voltage battery. Working at Tesla has been a dream of mine for many years now and it feels like a perfect next step after my valuable experience working on the WSU solar car team,” he said.

“I would highly encourage any ambitious students who are interested in this career path to join the team. Solar car puts you in front of industry leaders who are looking for your talent.”

Micah also has a new role as an Electrical Engineer at MP Space.



EVENING WITH THE CHANCELLOR

CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT OF WESTERN:
INNOVATION, PHILANTHROPY AND WORK THAT MATTERS



Professor Jennifer Westacott AC
and Dr Roy Medich OAM

On 9 October 2025, we celebrated Western's culture of philanthropy with our closest friends, donors and partners at the Parramatta City campus. Coinciding with the University's 35th anniversary, An Evening with the Chancellor was an opportunity to honour and connect with our longest-serving supporters, to recognise their generosity and reflect on our journey together.

"The Western Sydney region is undergoing a once-in-a-generation transformation," said Chancellor, Professor Jennifer Westacott AC, noting that every act of giving translates to more than just philanthropy – to ambition and possibility, to innovation and real-world impact.

Donors were invited to engage with a series of exhibitions showcasing the exciting work undertaken by staff and students of Western.

Starting with the Indigenous Leadership project, a landmark initiative to "embed Indigenous self-determination at the heart of the University", Professor Michelle Trudgett, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Leadership), unveiled the Indigenous Centre of Excellence – "a national hub for Indigenous knowledge, research and leadership" – at our Parramatta South campus on Darug Country.

Many School-based research and enterprises were presented, spanning across multiple disciplines and products of industry or community collaborations. Two key highlights were the Centre of Excellence in Nursing & Midwifery and the Centre for Innovation in

Teaching. Equipped with advanced technology and developed via cutting-edge research, the Centres aim to ensure that our graduates are not only well-prepared but exceptional in navigating shifting dynamics of the health and education sectors. Empowering the under-resourced creative industries in Western Sydney is also the Creative Arts Hub at Kingswood, which will become a space for championing inclusivity in the arts and amplifying diverse creative voices. A proud example of student-led undertakings is the solar car project, triumphant as the number one Australian solar car team at the 2025 Bridgestone World Solar Challenge, positioning Western as a leader in sustainable innovation and an inspiration for clean energy.

The panel on Accelerating Ambitions of Western Sydney through Philanthropy followed, centring around the scholarships and grants supporting students and researchers, as well as the donors who make them happen. Representing one of Western's key donors was Lee Hagipantelis, Principal at Brydens Lawyers, joined by Zainab Khavary, a Law graduate whose journey was made possible

through scholarship support; Dr Tara Roberts from the School of Medicine and a leading cancer researcher; and Dr Matilda Harry, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Yarramundi scholarship recipient, whose work is advancing knowledge and representation.

The 2025 iteration of the event also saw the Spirit of Western introduced as an annual tribute to those donors whose enduring commitment helped shape the University, exemplifying the values that define Western and a deep belief in the transformative power of education.

The evening concluded with the Chancellor presenting this inaugural recognition to Dr Roy Medich OAM, expressing gratitude for walking alongside this University "from its formative years to the institution of global standing" and continuing to enrich our community through the Medich Foundation's support.

The University is deeply grateful to have our donors and partners collaborate in the shared mission and vision we have under Western 2030 – a bold, exciting and ambitious strategic plan to lead us into the future.



Dr Aniss Chami, Professor Jennifer Westacott AC, Mr Elie Chami, Distinguished Professor George Williams AO.



Distinguished Professor Lynn Kemp

REAL WORLD RESEARCH AT ITS BEST

For over a decade, Distinguished Professor Lynn Kemp has worked in partnership with the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) to support her research and implementation of sustained home visiting programs for families with young children who are facing adversity.

Distinguished Professor Kemp is recognised as an international leader in the field of early childhood interventions in primary and community health and translational research. Her local, national and international research in early childhood continues to bring quality evidence-based early intervention programs to vulnerable families with young children in Australia and worldwide.

Originally trained as a registered nurse at the then Lidcombe Hospital, Distinguished Professor Kemp commenced her academic career in 2002 with a commitment to improving health equity for vulnerable groups, focused on the critical early years of life. The Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home-visiting (MECSH) program was developed in South West Sydney and has now received

USA Government approval as an effective, evidence-based sustained home-visiting intervention. Today, MECSH is implemented in Australia, the UK, USA and South Korea, currently serving more than 15,000 families worldwide. Significantly, in South Korea, Distinguished Professor Kemp’s work has been instrumental in the establishment of a universal

child and family health service system, serving the city’s 10 million residents, where previously families had no access to such support. Now in a new phase, the partnership between ARACY and Distinguished Professor Kemp continues to grow and expand. However, at its core is always her overarching vision “that every single family, no matter who they are, has access to the best support for their children”. For this to happen, ongoing work and research is always needed. “For me it is about always thinking: Where are the gaps for families at the moment? Who are the vulnerable families who need additional support and how do we research what is most effective?” she said. “For example, do we need a piece of work around how it can work best for families where the parents have

a disability? How can it work best for parents who are fostering or in kinship care?” This is where her partnership with ARACY works so well. “Philanthropy is the only way to make research like this work,” says Distinguished Professor Kemp. “As a researcher, ARACY are able to do things for me that I don’t have the expertise to do, predominately in an advocacy space - they are the peak national organisation promoting research for children and young people. By partnering with them, they can do the work they are best placed to do and I can do the work I am best placed to do.” The new partnership with ARACY comes with funding from Minderoo Foundation, which will focus on getting the best evidence-based programs out to the families that need it, where communities are

ready as well as where the gaps are, with a strong focus on rural and remote. “This kind of work is really only suited to philanthropic funding because of the way things need to be responsive and move and change as we go along. We need a partner who says let’s work out how things work, on the ground, in real life, with real people. Philanthropy allows us to look at how we make something that really actually functions - it’s where philanthropy nails the head. ARACY really wants to invest in real-world change - it is such a good match for what we want to do.”



Professor Ann Dadich

LIVING WELL, DYING WELL

PROFESSOR ANN DADICH EXPLORES HOW TO SUPPORT PEOPLE'S END-OF-LIFE DECISIONS

Professor Dadich is leading a team that aims to promote death literacy – the practical know-how about how to gain access to, understand and make informed choices about end-of-life and death care options. She and her colleagues have a particular interest in voluntary assisted dying (VAD), which enables an eligible person to ask for medical help to end their life.

“There appears to be different understandings and misunderstandings about voluntary assisted dying – what it is, who can access it, when they can access it, and how they can access it. This might partly explain variations in who accesses voluntary assisted dying services,” she said.

For instance, in New South Wales, during the 12 months from July 1 2024, to June 30 2025, there were 2,295 people who requested voluntary assisted dying and only 1,028 voluntary assisted dying deaths reported to the NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Board – an independent oversight and decision-making body. Of the people who had a first assessment for voluntary assisted dying, 25.5% were born overseas, and 5.7% had a first language that was not English.

“My colleagues and I are conducting research to understand some of these variations, particularly the role of cultural diversity. Given that Western Sydney is so culturally rich, it is a region that is well-placed to help us to understand what people know and want to know about voluntary assisted dying. This is important given the stigma that often surrounds voluntary assisted dying – stigma that can affect patients, their family members and clinicians. In research that my colleagues and I are conducting, people have shared stories about embarrassment or shame,” said Professor Dadich.

Professor Dadich's research is not about changing people's attitudes about voluntary assisted dying – she and her colleagues hope to help people to access the information they need and want to die well.

“We know there are people who are entertaining voluntary assisted dying but do not feel comfortable articulating their preferences.

We hope to make relevant information easier to access and serve as conversation starters,” she said.

“I am collaborating with colleagues from the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, the South Western Sydney Local Health District, Go Gentle Australia, and other key community organisations. Together, we plan to learn what people understand about voluntary assisted dying and promote death literacy,” said Professor Dadich.

This research is supported by the Wicking Trust, which is one of Australia's most significant charitable trusts distributing grants to people, programs and research that significantly improve the quality of life and death for older Australians. Professor Dadich said the Wicking Trust is keen to learn about innovative ways to approach ageing and dying well.

If you are interested in taking part in Professor Dadich's research or know someone who may want to learn more you can contact her team via A.Dadich@westernsydney.edu.au

SIR IAN POTTER FOUNDATION BACKS STUDY OF HEALTH AND EATING BEHAVIOURS WITH SMART TECHNOLOGY

Thanks to a \$160,947 grant from Sir Ian Potter Foundation, Western Sydney University is adding a new research platform that facilitates pre-clinical researchers getting precise answers to the bigger questions they have been asking. Rather than repeated handling of small laboratory animals, the technology passively captures activity patterns within a stable, familiar environment, enabling accurate phenotyping of conditions such as dementia, diabetes, obesity, cancer and mental health, minimising stress-induced confounding in animal models. This step also reflects Western's commitment to openness and continual improvement in animal research through the ANZCCART Openness Initiative.

Housed within the School of Medicine and integrated with the University's Behavioural Neuroscience Facility, the TSE PhenoMaster creates a seamless pipeline for automated, high-quality metabolic, behavioural and cognitive data acquisition. Its modular design enables expansion whilst continuously measuring food and fluid intake, energy expenditure, circadian rhythms, locomotion and cognition - capturing real-world patterns without operator-induced stress. The result is improved data quality alongside better welfare outcomes, aligning scientific rigour with humane practice.

This investment will immediately strengthen programs probing the gut-brain axis, schizophrenia, substance use, cancer biology, and lifestyle interventions such as diet and exercise-areas where precise, longitudinal readouts are critical to translating lab discoveries into patient benefit. Priority access will support Western teams across diabetes, neuroscience, cancer, food engineering and computational biology, ensuring the platform becomes a shared engine for cross-disciplinary impact. Collaboration is core: researchers will partner with Macquarie University, RMIT and Roskilde University (Denmark) to accelerate comparative studies and co-authored publications while positioning Western as a hub for open, ethical preclinical science.

This project, which was initiated in February 2026, is led by Professor Tim Karl and Professor Anand Hardikar, and supported by their teams of dedicated technical and post-doctoral researchers.

The project is a great expression of philanthropy at its best: a strategic investment that upgrades core research capability, improves animal welfare, and accelerates discovery across multiple disease areas. Together, we're building a research ecosystem where precision and compassion go hand in hand, delivering measurable impact for Western Sydney and beyond.



Professor Tim Karl, Professor Anand Hardikar and their research group.

PSYCHEDELIC

SUPPORT FOR NEW MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH



Dr Mitchell Low

Thanks to a philanthropic grant, a Western Sydney University team are currently researching how acacia trees – some rich in psychedelic compounds – could change the way we treat some mental health conditions.

This novel study, testing 855 species of Australian wattle, is under way at the National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM).

“Bush Medicine teaches us that these trees have many uses, from the treatment of cardiovascular to gastrointestinal issues and infectious disease to pain,” says head of the research team Dr Mitchell Low.

“Our research is especially concerned with the use of wattle in emerging mental health treatments. Few people know that wattle contains the compound DMT, making them one of Australia’s most prolific psychedelic plants.

“ABS figures estimate 4.3 million* Australian’s have a long-term mental illness and treatments don’t work well for everyone, so there’s an urgent need for new options.”

Dr Low said with Australia recently becoming an international trailblazer in the legalisation of psychedelic medicine, their research aimed to connect these emerging therapies with Australia’s unique psychedelic environment.

This is no small feat, with Dr Low and his team working with 90 per cent of the Australian acacia species genus.

NICM has engaged with the Botanic Gardens Sydney, the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra, the West Australian Herbarium and private collectors, which has resulted in more than 800 samples being secured.

These 800 samples currently include 85 unique species, samples of certified botanical material, and approximately 200 unique samples that were identified by enthusiasts and require corroboration - with the five-year study still in the first year.

“We also believe showing the value of specific acacia will help to justify their protection, supporting tangible conservation efforts,” Dr Low said.

“This research is critical because Australia’s acacia plants are unique and by modern standards, largely unexplored. Psychedelic-assisted therapies using substances like psilocybin have shown up to 83 per cent success in early clinical trials for difficult mental health cases.

“By tapping into Australia’s native plants, this project could open new medical pathways, support a homegrown psychedelic medicine industry, and even create new agricultural opportunities.”

Dr Low said this could be a massive improvement on current treatments with the HILDA survey reporting 76 per cent of depression and anxiety sufferers on prescription medication are still on them after four years.

“It also sets up a model for studying other Australian plants in the future, speeding up discoveries that could benefit both mental and physical health worldwide,” he said.

Preliminary testing has now begun at NICM, with over 100 samples analysed for known targeted psychoactive compounds.

The team have manufactured an ayahuasca-type treatment using wattle that has undergone a successful early-stage clinical trial and was found to be robustly associated with a range of beneficial, persisting psychological effects.

Dr Low says that the philanthropic support for this work means that it is actually happening, now, in a way that best suits what the team is trying to study.

“This research is so important and will benefit others with a long-term legacy but was not a good fit for other funding sources,” he said.

“Philanthropic funding is the most supportive type of research funding. We were able to plan the exact research we wanted to do and make the research impact clear. For other funding sources, the research is adapted to fit in the constraints of the application, with limited scope, budget and timeframe. With this philanthropic support the research was described exactly as best fits the need.”

Dr Low said he was immensely grateful for this support and encouraged others to think about how they may also be able to make this kind of impact.

“Your support can go a long way and have a lasting impact on society. You don’t need to have a research idea, the team at Western can find the right researchers that you can work with. There are few places your support could mean more for research.”

**1.7 million people (8.4%) had both a 12-month mental disorder and a physical condition. 2.6 million people (13.1%) had a 12-month mental disorder only. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/2020-2022>*

AUSTRALIAN NATIVE FRUITS SUPPORTING GUT HEALTH

Dr Deep Jyoti Bhuyan is a Senior Research Fellow and Lead Researcher in The GutBiotics Lab at the National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM) at Western Sydney University. Thanks to an anonymous philanthropic grant, Dr Bhuyan and his team are exploring methods for generating postbiotics from Australian native fruits through probiotic gut bacteria-based fermentation techniques. Here, we learn more from Dr Bhuyan about this work and how philanthropy is helping to ensure impactful results whilst also moving the needle in changing the way research is tested, without the use of animals.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend a minimum intake of five servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit daily. Alarming, 92% of Australian adults do not meet the vegetable guideline, and 50% do not meet the recommended fruit intake. This dietary deficiency contributes to poor nutritional health and imposes a significant burden on the healthcare system, costing over \$195 billion annually across Australia.

The gut microbiome is vital for food metabolism, nutrient absorption, health maintenance and disease prevention. An individual's gut microbiome composition impacts their ability to absorb nutrients. Consequently, even those who follow healthy diets may struggle to absorb nutrients if their gut microbiome is altered.

While prebiotics and probiotics show promise, their effectiveness relies on the adaptability of the gut microbiome. Restoring an altered microbiome poses challenges due to environmental factors, such as diet and antibiotic use, and individual biological differences.

In this context, postbiotics offer an innovative approach to improving

nutrition and supporting healthy ageing. Postbiotics are the beneficial by-products produced during the digestion of prebiotic and probiotic foods.

Australian native fruits have played a crucial role in the Indigenous diet and traditional Bush Medicine for millennia. Varieties such as Kakadu plum, Illawarra plum, Davidson's plum and native currant are particularly noted for their high antioxidant content, which holds the potential to significantly transform the global functional food industry. Notably, Kakadu plum contains the highest recorded levels of vitamin C in the world, approximately one hundred times greater than that found in oranges. Nevertheless, research on the bioavailability of antioxidants present in these native fruits remains limited.

Our research, therefore, aims to provide essential nutrients to individuals through the application of postbiotics, regardless of their gut microbiome variability. A critical preliminary step is to investigate the behaviour of externally produced postbiotics within the human body.

Thanks to funding from our philanthropic grant, we are

exploring methods for generating postbiotics from Australian native fruits through probiotic gut bacteria-based fermentation. This initiative will also enhance our understanding of how probiotic gut bacteria affects the bioavailability of antioxidants derived from native fruits.

Having secured the philanthropic grant, we have then been able to secure additional funding from the Australian Traditional Medicine Society, and we have facilitated a productive collaboration with the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation at the University of Queensland. As part of this partnership, our PhD student undertook a two-week laboratory training program at the University of Queensland to acquire advanced techniques to elucidate the impact of the digestive system on the bioavailability of antioxidants in native fruits.

Our research group has shown that the gut microbiome performs a variety of functions through the production of postbiotics. Collectively, our contributions have significantly advanced the fundamental understanding of postbiotics and have influenced



Dr Deep Jyoti Bhuyan and members of his team

future clinical and translational research initiatives. Our work in this area has attracted considerable national and international media coverage, appearing in 160 news outlets, including The Conversation, ABC and BBC, reaching an audience of over 40 million.

This extensive interest has enabled us to collaborate with industry partners on project design and has facilitated the commercialisation of a functional dairy product exhibiting both prebiotic and antiviral properties, in Australia and internationally.

I am proud that our achievements have been recognised with the Marcus Blackmore Outstanding Contribution to Research, Education or Training Award from Complementary Medicines Australia (CMA). This award honours the most significant contributions or breakthroughs by individuals or small teams in the fields of education, research or training that benefit the complementary medicines industry. The CMA serves as the principal industry body representing the Australian complementary medicines sector, which encompasses manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, consultants, retailers, health professionals and educators. Furthermore, we were honoured with the People's

Choice Award at the Western Sydney University Research Impact Competition in 2022, as well as the NICM HRI ECR Excellence Award in 2020, further underscoring our impact within the field.

Another benefit of our philanthropic funding is that it is enabling our efforts to establish a novel, cruelty-free platform to investigate the effects of foods, drugs and natural products on gut health. This initiative aligns with the recent paradigm shift by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which has eliminated the requirement for animal testing prior to human trials, recognising the historically weak correlation between animal study outcomes and clinical trial outcomes.

At the local level, the New South Wales Government has recently introduced the Non-Animal Technologies Network (NAT-Net) aimed at reducing and replacing the use of animals in medical research. This initiative seeks to promote alternative scientific methods and foster the development of innovative therapeutic agents.

Our new gut preclinical model is designed to replace animal use, particularly in the context of gut health research. We are concurrently exploring how certain postbiotics influence the integrity and energy

metabolism of this novel gut model. Given that several postbiotics are already commercially available for gut health in many countries outside Australia, our research findings could have meaningful real-world applications in a relatively short timeframe through expedited clinical trials. Ultimately, the mechanistic breakthroughs from this work may lead to the development of innovative gut microbiome-based therapies, enhancing personalised nutrition and health, and providing healthcare practitioners with more effective and sustainable microbiome-centred interventions to address nutrition-related conditions.

Philanthropic support continues to be absolutely vital to our research endeavours. In an environment characterised by limited government funding for scientific research, such support significantly enhances research and innovation in ways that may not yet be fully envisioned. Contributions from philanthropic sources are instrumental in fostering new scientific ideas, building capacity for training future generations of scientists, and promoting collaborative efforts that yield groundbreaking research with substantial societal benefits. This type of funding can genuinely change lives.

GLOBAL GUT HUB IN SOUTH WEST SYDNEY

Associate Professor Vincent Ho is passionate about challenging taboo gut issues and creating a global hub for gut health in South West Sydney.

At the GI Motility Disorders Unit based at Western Sydney University's School of Medicine, he and the team are building that hub with a growing number of patient advocates and philanthropic supporters, to promote awareness of gastrointestinal motility disorders to Australians, through education, translational research and support.

Chronic gut diseases such as gastroparesis, irritable bowel syndrome and gastroesophageal reflux have a large impact on the physical and mental health of individuals. Dietary and medical interventions are often ineffective and symptoms can be severe and occur on a daily basis.

Associate Professor Ho says the work done by the team is critical.

“We are passionate about our research program because it holds the promise of improving symptoms, improving the quality of life, and returning to patients with gastrointestinal disorders the meaningful lives they deserve. Our focus is on bench-side to bed-side research using the latest innovations and technology in the scientific field.

“Disorders of gut-brain interaction are incredibly common and worldwide the prevalence is close to 40%. A significant proportion of these people have very severe symptoms occurring on a daily basis.”

Gastroparesis is one such condition that can be chronic and debilitating with symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and early fullness with eating food. There is no cure for gastroparesis but the work of the GI Motility Disorders Unit is actively studying the underlying cause of this disease.

Associate Professor Ho was the first in Australia to carry out a full thickness gastric biopsy at Campbelltown private hospital with endoscopy, in a patient with gastroparesis. Normally an invasive surgery is used to obtain the deeper layers of gastric tissue; the use of minimally invasive endoscopy represents a major advance in understanding the cellular changes that underpin gastroparesis. This gives hope that a better understanding of what causes gastroparesis can help one day deliver a cure.

2025 was another outstanding year for the GI Motility Disorders Unit research activities with a number of highlights.

Dr Jerry Zhou was the Western Sydney University Research Impact competition winner for the novel anorectal biofeedback device

“Ins and Out”. This device, which is designed to retrain the bowel function of people with constipation and faecal incontinence, can administer this training to patients from the comfort of their own home. It is the first Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approved medical device developed by Western Sydney University and won a Good Design award in the medical devices category in 2024.

Associate Professor Ho has been a chief investigator on a funded 2025 Australian Research Council (ARC) grant. The title of the research project “Using multisensory illusions to test the cause of bodily desires” is a collaboration with psychology researchers at Macquarie University to investigate the mechanisms behind hunger.

The GI Motility Disorders Unit has also continued its proven record of securing job opportunities for higher degree students after graduation. Dr Daphne Foong is now based in Los Angeles and is employed by a biomedical device company Alimetry, specialising in their novel electrogastronomy technology which can help map out the electrical activity of stomach disorders. Dr Nafiseh Mirabdolhosseini successfully gained her PhD while building a novel microendoscopy device and is now employed as an engineer with Planet Innovation. Associate Professor Ho has found employment for current WSU PhD students Mya Polkamp and

Pranav Pancham and ex-WSU biomedical science student Emily Sok as clinical trial coordinators at Sydney Clinical Trials, a new startup in Campbelltown focused on delivering early and late phase gastroenterology pharmaceutical sponsored clinical trials.

Associate Professor Ho said he is always particularly proud when the Unit can serve as a stepping stone for young researchers to learn, grow and then take their knowledge out into the world, noting that philanthropy is one of the key factors that allows the Unit to employ and support PhD students.

“Philanthropy for the GI Motility Disorders Unit continues to be absolutely essential,” he said.

“Without philanthropic support there would be no funding for our essential research academic staff or our PhD students. The unit itself would not exist without philanthropic funding.

“We are incredibly grateful to our private donors who give each year as well as the many community groups who support us including the Mark Grundy Oesophageal Cancer Awareness Group Inc. (OCAGI) and Australian Rotary Health.”

Dr Vincent Ho

WomSAT:

MAPPING SIGHTINGS, IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR WOMBATS

Wombats are one of Australia's most recognisable native mammals, but many people only ever glimpse them briefly, on a bushwalk, near a roadside, or in a neighbour's paddock.

That's part of what makes wombat conservation challenging: they live across large areas, and what's happening in one region can look very different to the next.

WomSAT (the Wombat Survey and Analysis Tool) was created at Western Sydney University to address this challenge, by turning everyday observations into reliable data that supports research and practical action.

Associate Professor Julie Old explains why the project began. "I saw wombats suffering from sarcoptic mange - a disease that if left untreated, results in a slow and painful death."

She also makes the scale of the challenge clear. "It's impossible for one person to investigate the disease occurrence across the entire range of wombats, but with citizen scientists helping we can work together to help wombats."

Through WomSAT, community members record wombat and burrow sightings online, building a national dataset that can be checked, mapped and analysed over time.

That pipeline, from observation to evidence, has enabled a major step forward in understanding where mange is likely to occur. "We have used the data in WomSAT to predict the occurrence of wombats with mange."

Julie explains why this matters. "Having a better understanding of where wombats are predicted to have mange, will allow us to focus treatment efforts in these areas and enhance animal welfare outcomes."

She then points to what can happen when the data is shared back with communities. "We have had citizen scientists use the data to lobby for the installation of signs and other mitigation strategies to reduce wombat roadkill."

A practical extension of this work is training that supports consistent, safe treatment in the field. "In combination with the Wombat Protection Society of Australia we have developed online courses.

These courses train citizen scientists to treat wombats safely and effectively in the field."

This treatment data is also entered into WomSAT, allowing treatments to be tracked, leading to better outcomes for wombats. Furthermore, the precise treatment can vary, and the information gained will be analysed to determine the best treatment regimens in the field.

Julie and her team are also working towards the development of a vaccine against sarcoptic mange, and the support of donors is helping accelerate progress in this critical research.

WomSAT shows how research and community participation can reinforce each other: supporting better predictions, more targeted treatment for wombats, while also helping identify roadkill hotspots and support strategies to reduce roadkill and enhance driver safety.

"The support of the Western community helps us to continue enhancing our understanding of sarcoptic mange in wombats and improve health outcomes, as well as reduce wombat roadkill," says Julie.



WATERWAY HEALTH IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Dr Michelle Ryan is an academic at the School of Science at Western Sydney University who is passionate about improving waterway health. Dr Ryan works with a number of community groups to improve awareness and increase education on water issues. She is a passionate educator and researcher with her current research areas focused on the biological aspect of waterways, researching platypus, freshwater turtles and macroinvertebrates in the Sydney basin.

Dr Ryan uses her research, particularly concerning the platypus, to connect and engage with the community, industry and government with the aim of creating resilient waterways throughout Western Sydney.

This has led to recent funding from Penrith City Council for Dr Ryan to lead the development of a Caring for Water Country microcredential. Integrating western science, traditional knowledge, caring for Country and cultural values this course is designed as a short, practice oriented learning experience, which will offer an accessible entry point for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, people working in related industry who want to gain more knowledge, and community members interested in environmental science and water stewardship.

The project will be launched in May 2026, however workshops to build the foundations of the program have already commenced.

“By engaging local partners and centring Country-based learning, we aim to lower barriers to first engagement with the University

as well as strengthening early connections with place, community and prospective study pathways,” said Dr Ryan.

“The aim of the project is to ensure that more people connect to their waterways. The platypus is a really great icon for waterway health and getting people out, sitting on the water, gives them a really good chance to reflect on how we are connected in a greater ecosystem.”

Josh Staines from Penrith City Council said they were proud to be collaborating on the program.

“We are working with the First Nations community in Penrith to reimagine what the riverway should look like, how we can go about improving its water quality and what are the important things in the river such as platypus, the insects, the habitat, the large woody debris that are essential for this river to thrive again.”

“We started off by doing a First Nations water forum here in Penrith at the Log Cabin where we brought community members from Dharuk, Gandangara, Dhawaral and Aboriginal controlled community organisations together to hear stories and lived experience for what caring for water Country has looked like in the past and where we would like to go in the future as a collective, as a community coming together for that single purpose of promoting a healthy and thriving river that has mob at the centre of it.”

Dr Ryan said that working with Penrith City Council was an important and useful collaboration.

“Western Sydney University and Penrith City Council have been working together on the Platypus Project – we realised we had a common goal in creating better waterways for our communities for future generations.

“The aim of the project will be to ensure that more community members have shared knowledge that will enable them to become custodians of the riverways for generations to come.”





TEEING OFF FOR IMPACT



Nathan Thompson, Professor Jennifer Westacott AC and Charlie Bijjani from Naming Partners Walker Corporation.

CHANCELLOR'S GOLF DAY 2025

Western Sydney University was proud to be the host of Chancellor's Golf Day 2025 which raised an incredible \$120,000 for the Badanami Futures Fund.

On 23 November 2025, our community came together at the Lakeside Golf Club, Camden to celebrate the third annual fundraising event, with 112 players participating in a friendly game of golf to support the Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education.

The Badanami Centre is a culturally safe space for over 880 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, providing urgent, practical support to invest in Indigenous education and leadership at Western. Badanami staff work closely with Indigenous students to understand their lived realities and respectfully deliver small-scale, high-impact grants to remove challenges and help them to stay enrolled and succeed at university.

“Every swing today supports the Badanami Futures Fund helping Indigenous students overcome

barriers and achieve their dreams,” says Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Professor George Williams AO, acknowledging with deep gratitude that the contributions of our sponsors are changing the course of families by simply keeping one student at a time ‘stay the course’ at university.

Chancellor, Professor Jennifer Westacott AC, also expressed her thanks and appreciation to the University's community of supporters and alumni who took part in the day, with special congratulations to the winners, as well as to all the teams for bringing their best game in an atmosphere of friendship and giving. “We walk in friendship, we walk to have fun, we played a win, but mostly we played to do something really impactful.”

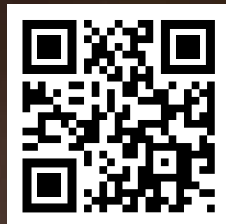
Chancellor's Golf Day 2025 was presented by Walker Corporation and supported by Stockland, Amazon, Evolve Housing, GJK Facility Services, Brydens Lawyers, BY Group, KARI Foundation, Mirvac, Piccolo Me, Richard Crookes Constructions, Solutions Consulting Australia, UniLodge, UDIA and Wests Tigers Rugby League Football Club.

University is a pathway to intergenerational change by empowering future Indigenous leaders and strengthening culture. We thank our sponsors for their generous and staunch partnership in joining us for a fantastic day of golf filled with camaraderie and the shared purpose of building a better Australia.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all our donors, who support the mission of Western Sydney University.

You can use this QR Code to visit our past Impact Reports and our Donor Honour Roll.



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