

**Strategy 2023-2030**

**Building a Brighter Future,  
Together**

*Ngala Kwop Biddi*



We acknowledge that Murdoch University is situated on the lands of the Whadjuk and Binjareb Noongar people. We pay our respects to their enduring and dynamic culture and the leadership of Noongar elders past and present. The boodjar (country) on which Murdoch University is located has for thousands of years been a place of learning. We at Murdoch University are proud to continue this long tradition.

We would like to thank Dr Richard Walley OAM and Mr Olman Walley for the Noongar naming of the strategy.

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Murdoch University has, from its foundation in 1974, been a University of Difference. Established as the second university in the State of Western Australia, Murdoch has always been associated with environment and conservation, social justice and inclusion, and providing pathways into and through a university education for people who had previously been excluded.

The world has changed dramatically since 1974. The human population of our shared planet has increased from 4 billion to 8 billion people. Carbon emissions have also doubled, while plastic production has increased 20-fold, to the extent that each year we produce the combined weight of every person alive in plastic. The impact of these activities on the environment has become increasingly evident and undeniable, and the need to achieve sustainable development has now become a central societal goal.

The revolution in digital technology and communications that has taken place has allowed development of the global transport and communication network, facilitating supply chains that span the globe, generating specialisation of national economies and seeing the rise of multinational companies rivalling countries in economic power.



The higher education sector has been similarly impacted. The Murdoch University of today has hundreds of students from overseas studying in our Australian campuses, while we also teach thousands of students who are based outside Australia through our Dubai and Singapore campuses. Technology has revolutionised the way we do business and the way we interact with and teach our students.

From 2020 to 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted society right around the world in a manner never experienced in human history. The transport network spread the virus between nations at a rate far exceeding any other previous pandemic. At the same time, the international research system supported the development of effective vaccines at a speed never previously attained. A key contributor to this development was the sharing of information as quickly as discoveries were made or data collected.

The closing of borders and workplaces that formed part of national responses to the pandemic stimulated the development of alternative ways of working, particularly through the use of digital platforms. Many organisations and businesses were able to keep working at normal or above normal levels despite their entire workforce working from home. Universities were no exception, and many universities had students studying remotely for more than a year.

With disruption comes opportunity, and the pandemic experience has taught us many lessons about the true value of the campus university experience, and how we can effectively facilitate learning for students who cannot or do not want to attend campus in person.

Over the last decade or so we have also seen a growing appreciation and valuing of Australia's First Nations peoples, their traditional knowledges and their cultures. This is part of a global trend towards acknowledging the wrongs of the past and embracing Indigenous identities and cultures.

From 2017–2022, Murdoch University followed a five-year Strategic Plan with a 10-year horizon. The world has changed around us during these five years, and so we decided to review the 10-year horizon as part of the process to develop the next Strategic Plan. Noting that five years was not long enough to achieve the objectives of the previous plan, whilst too much change happens in 10 years for a plan to remain relevant, we decided our new Strategy would be for the period 2023–2030.

We then engaged with our stakeholders – students, staff, alumni, Indigenous voices, government and industry partners – to understand what they wanted to see in the Murdoch University of 2030, what attributes and skills we needed to be developing in our students to prepare them for the future, where our research should be focused, how we should be engaging with industry and the community, and so forth. Through surveys, focus groups and workshops, we assembled a picture of what the Murdoch University of the future should look like, and what we should be doing to get there.

From this process emerged an overwhelming desire for Murdoch University to restate its unique identity and distinctiveness, and a realisation that the characteristics which set Murdoch aside from the 'pack' are exactly what the future of our society both need and desire. We developed a vision for what that University should look like, and a restatement of our purpose and values.

Three themes emerged that form both our identity and our focus for the future: Sustainability; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and First Nations. We saw how these three themes could flow through the three core activities of the University that date back to our Statute: Education; Research; and Engagement. We also saw how these activities need to be underpinned by a set of three enablers: our people; our systems and services; and our infrastructure. We debated as to whether sustainable finances, the global enabler, should be called out, but decided that underpinning the University Strategy with a sustainable financial plan would be sufficient.

From this process emerged a first draft of the Strategy, which was sent out to our stakeholder groups for comment. Following consideration of feedback on the first draft, a second draft was produced for consideration by Senate.

Some may see a contradiction in our commitment to sustainability with our intention to recruit more international students and engage more deeply internationally, as both activities generate additional air travel. We will minimise the carbon impact of this travel wherever possible, while recognising that a fully sustainable society requires the development of aircraft that are carbon neutral in operation, and we look forward to the time when our students and staff can travel internationally without generating a sizeable carbon footprint.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this Strategy, and I look forward to working with you to see our vision achieved.

**Professor Andrew J Deeks**  
**Vice Chancellor and President**  
**Murdoch University**

# Our Shared Purpose

To change lives and society for the better through accessible education and research, contributing to the solution of societal and environmental challenges and providing an inclusive, caring community in which everyone can realise their potential.

## Our Values

These five values guide how we behave individually and as a collective as we undertake our purpose.

Authenticity

Integrity

Respect

Inclusivity

Openness







## Our Principles

These eight principles guide how we lead, manage and work together. We will:

- Act with justice, respect and responsible care
- Be collegiate and respectful of other points of view
- Protect academic freedom
- Be agile, flexible and resilient
- Make decisions at the most appropriate level
- Be transparent in decision-making and with information
- Adopt common approaches to common tasks
- Be careful stewards of our resources

## Our Vision

Our vision is that Murdoch University will be widely recognised as the university of choice for people who care, who value inclusion, curiosity and innovation, and who desire to make a positive social impact. We will be a leading university in education, teaching and research in sustainability; a thriving, welcoming, diverse and inclusive community. Murdoch University will be the university of first choice for First Nations peoples, promoting and benefiting from Indigenous knowledges. Our quality education will be contemporary, accessible and inclusive. Our graduates will be keenly sought by employers and will be known for having adaptability, fresh perspectives, practical skills and a social conscience. Our research will be impactful, and we will have strong industry and institutional collaborations.



# Our Strategy

To achieve our purpose and our vision, in this Strategy we set out three Strategic Themes that will flow through everything we do, and that, taken together, characterise the distinctiveness and identity of Murdoch University. We identify three Core Activities that are fundamental to achieving our purpose and can be traced back to the Murdoch University Act. For each strategic theme and each core activity we identify an overarching objective. Realising these six objectives will in turn allow us to realise our vision. We also set out three enablers that underpin the achievement of these objectives.

## Sustainability

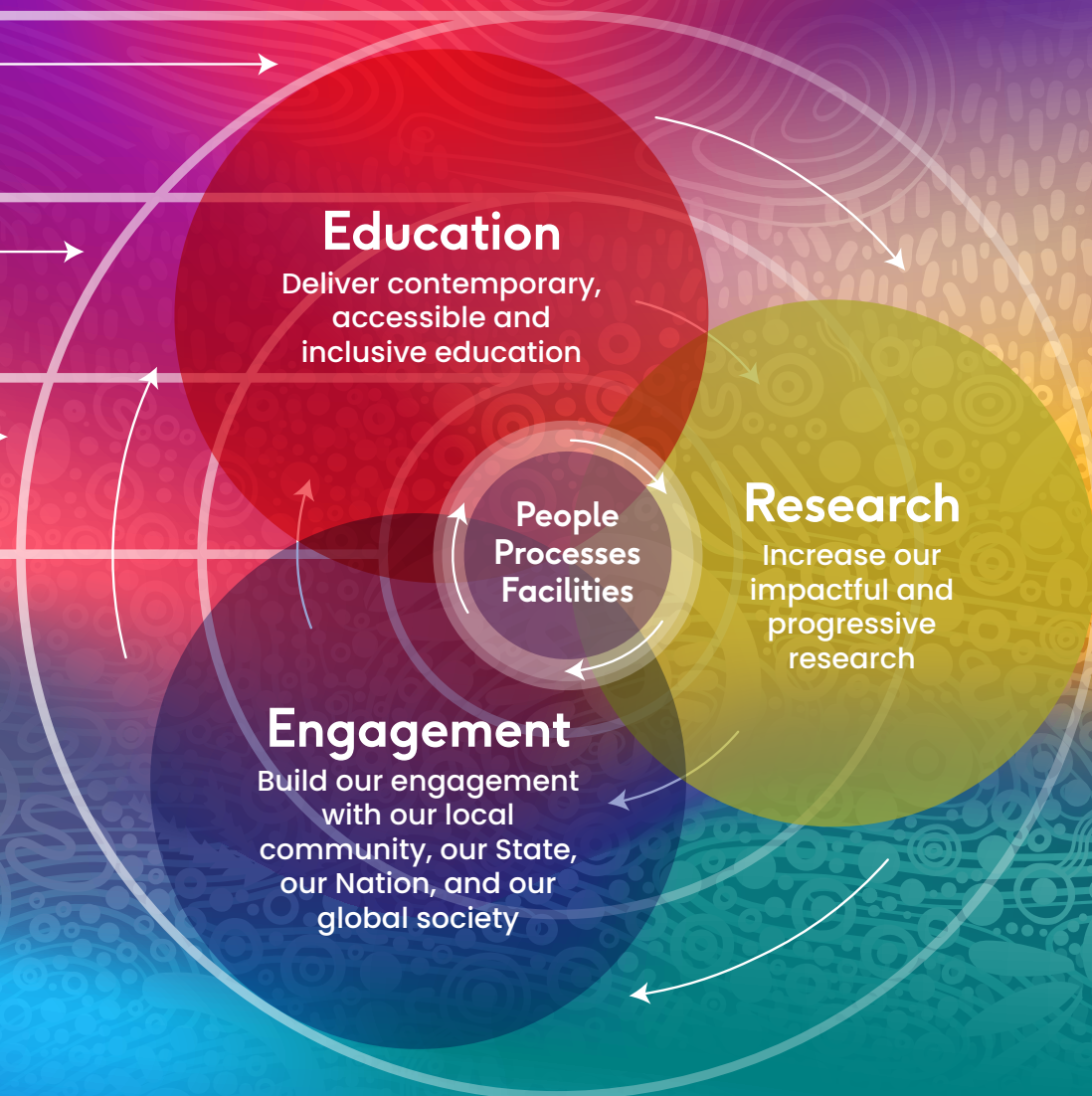
Be a leading university in education, teaching, and translational research in sustainability

## Equity, diversity and inclusion

Build a welcoming, diverse and inclusive community

## First Nations

Become the University of Choice for First Nations peoples





# Strategic Themes

These strategic themes will guide and shape much of our activity over the lifetime of the Strategy. In addition, we have identified a specific objective for each theme, and key actions we will undertake to meet that objective. Each theme will be led by a Pro Vice Chancellor, who will be member of the Senior Leadership Team and chair a University-level working group to operationalise these and other actions in support of the objective.

# Sustainability

## Objective:

**Be a leading university in education, teaching, and translational research in sustainability, nurturing mindsets and creating solutions for a better and more sustainable world, a university renowned for its commitment to, and expertise in, sustainability and environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG), providing a model and the tools for behaving and operating sustainably.**

The biggest challenge facing humanity is to develop a sustainable global society that can survive for millennia without destroying the fragile ecosystems of our planet. To live sustainably, we must foster earth literacies and compassionate mindsets, advance social and technical competencies that help us develop and embrace clean technologies, and help eliminate waste in a circular economy where materials are reused and re-processed without a continual reliance on extraction of finite minerals from the environment. We must be able to produce foods and medicines, goods and services without depleting or damaging our environment. And we must protect the biodiversity of our living planet, upon which we are also reliant, to ensure quality of life for all.

Since its foundation, Murdoch University has been a leader in sustainability, being a 'green university' committed to sustainability even before those terms had been coined. Our commitment to sustainability is authentic, deep-rooted and part of our identity as evidenced in our commitments to the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this Strategy, we restate our commitment to sustainability and ESG, undertaking to:

- Ensure a sustainability ethos guides all activities of the University
- Become a recognised centre of excellence for sustainability and ESG, covering education, research and research translation, and professional development by 2030
- Develop and implement a campus sustainability plan to achieve truly sustainable campuses by 2030
- Develop and implement an operation sustainability plan to achieve carbon neutrality in our operations and 0% waste to landfill by 2030
- Develop and implement a university transport and commuting plan to move all transport and commuting associated with the University towards net zero
- Develop the Harry Butler Science Centre and through this Centre and other means, promote awareness of sustainability issues in Western Australian schools and in the community
- Ensure all Murdoch students and staff learn about and embrace the challenges facing the environment and the principles of sustainable development

# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

## Objective:

**Build a welcoming, diverse and inclusive community and environment that is equitable and safe, and that provides a culturally safe and supportive environment where all members of our community can realise their potential.**

Widening access to higher education has long been recognised as an effective approach to levelling up society. Murdoch University, from its foundation, has provided access to higher education to people from non-traditional backgrounds and circumstances, along with a strong commitment to social justice.

Globalisation has seen increasing diversification of society: locally, nationally and globally. We are increasingly aware of both the strengths of diversity in effective working, but also the challenges of working in a culturally diverse environment. Through this Strategy, we will build on our strong, genuine commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and we commit to:

- Further diversify our student and staff body
- Build a culturally safe and inclusive study and work environment
- Engage proactively in EDI initiatives, including Athena Swan and our Reconciliation Action Plan, regularly tracking and reporting on all University commitments
- Develop/increase intercultural competency skills amongst students and staff
- Improve accessibility across campus
- Ensure Murdoch students and staff develop intercultural competency skills and embrace EDI and social justice principles



# First Nations

## Objective:

**Become the university of first choice for First Nations peoples, and an exemplar in embracing and promoting and benefiting from Indigenous knowledges and cultural inclusivity.**

In recent times, awareness and recognition of the value of Australia's Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges has increased dramatically, and there is increasing acknowledgement of the wrongs of the past. While elements of this process are uniquely Australian, as we have the privilege of being home to the oldest continuous culture in the world, this is also part of a worldwide movement towards recognising the value of First Nations peoples, cultures and knowledges.

Over the last decade, Murdoch University has successfully built the number of Aboriginal students both studying at the University and successfully completing their studies, and we currently have the highest proportion of Aboriginal students at any Western Australian university, and a completion rate for these students that is similar to our non-Aboriginal student cohort. Building on this strong foundation, in this Strategy we will:

- Celebrate, respect, engage and learn from the original custodians of this land
- Build the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in our domestic student body to match their representation in the general population
- Develop a Centre of Excellence in First Nation Peoples, Cultures and Knowledges
- Introduce dual signage wherever reasonable, including naming of buildings and significant sites
- Increase our employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples to match the proportion in the general population
- Embrace truth-telling – find ways to tell the stories of the past treatment of Aboriginal people around campus
- Provide all students and staff with cultural awareness training and build within them an understanding of and respect for First Nations peoples

# Core Activities

Under the Murdoch University Act, the University is committed to core activities that can be broadly categorised as Education, Research, and Engagement. These activities are common to all research-led universities, and the distinctiveness of Murdoch University comes from the way the three strategic themes flow through these activities. To support the realisation of our vision, we have identified an overarching objective for each of our core activities and actions to support the achievement of the objective. Each core activity will be led at Senior Leadership Team level by a Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) who will chair a university-level committee to oversee the core activity and alignment with the Strategy.

# Education

## Objective:

**Deliver contemporary, accessible and inclusive education, with a high quality and engaging student experience, producing graduates who are adaptable and have fresh perspectives and a social conscience.**

Murdoch University has always been known for providing a supportive and flexible environment that adapts to its students rather than requiring its students to adapt to it. Murdoch University staff have a reputation for going above and beyond the call of duty to support the learning and progress of our students. Although student satisfaction remains high, the level of satisfaction has been falling slowly for some time and was particularly impacted by the pandemic experience of 2020–2022. Over the course of this Strategy, we will renew our commitment to quality education and the student experience, and we will:

- Undertake purposeful course design to address the themes, being adventurous
- Introduce a coherent program of micro-credentials and short courses, particularly in the Strategy theme areas
- Provide more flexible curriculum (Minors/Majors) combinations and flexible pathways
- Promote the campus experience while also accommodating hybrid learning
- Increase work integrated learning and the opportunities for students to have different placements, for example non-urban and international



# Research

## Objective:

**Increase our impactful and progressive research in our areas of strength and excellent research across our disciplines.**

Over the last 10 years, Murdoch University has focused its research in the areas of Food, Health and the Environment, building on our historic strengths. We have recruited excellent established and early-career researchers in each area, and we have been growing both our research output and our research grant success in these areas. Despite the success of this approach, there has been a degree of dis-enfranchisement of academics whose research does not align with these areas. In this Strategy, we will continue to support and build our research institutes, but we will also support and build the broader research base of the University, ensuring we have quality research being undertaken in the areas in which we teach, so that all learning at Murdoch University is research-led. We will:

- Maintain research focus/support and broaden the base for staff engagement
- Promote and support research across our discipline base, both basic and applied
- Provide mentoring and peer support to increase research performance
- Build commercialisation, entrepreneurship and consultancy activities
- Enhance support for research project development

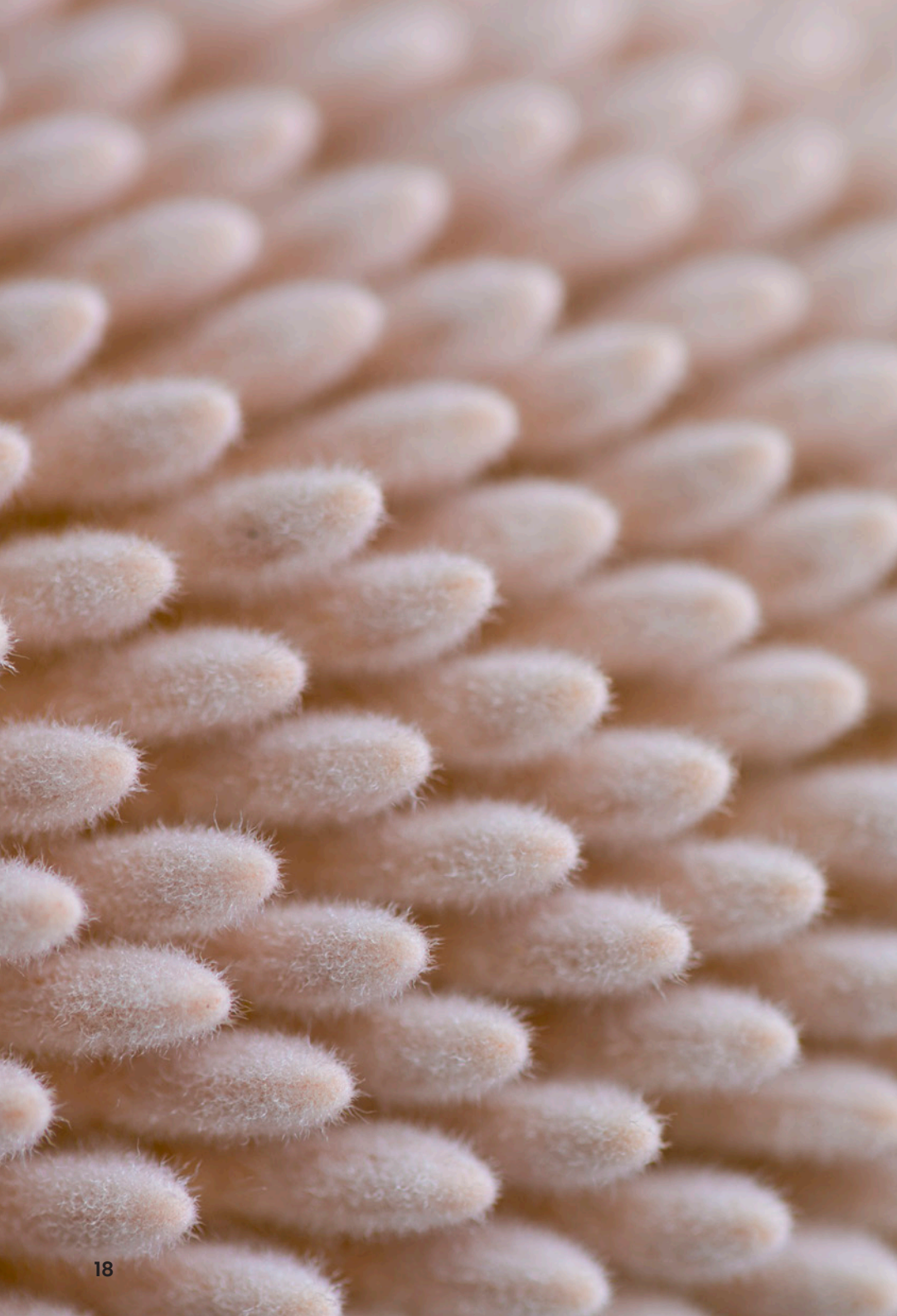
# Engagement

## Objective:

**Build engagement with our local community, our State, our Nation and our global society, creating mutually beneficial partnerships at all levels.**

Although Murdoch University has developed some good national and global partnerships in recent times, we have not always done this in a coordinated way, and our stakeholders would like to see more engagement with community, industry and like-minded organisations both locally and globally. With a DVC to lead this activity, we will take a more deliberate and structured approach to our engagement, increasing the impact of our education and research activities and enhancing our contribution to society. Among other activities we will:

- Build a portfolio of major strategic partnerships to mutual benefit
- Develop an internationalisation strategy, including Transnational Education, ensuring we get maximum benefit from our international engagement for our domestic students and our research
- Host more community events on campus and develop self-guided campus tours for visitors emphasising the cultural heritage and biodiversity of the campus
- Strengthen connections with alumni
- Tell our success stories, building our reputation



# Enablers

These three enablers will underpin our ability to achieve our vision and will support the achievement of the six objectives outlined in this Strategy.

## Empower and Develop our People

A university is fundamentally about people, and part of our purpose is to provide an accessible, inclusive, caring community in which everyone can realise their potential. In support of our people, we will:

- Develop an equitable and coherent workload allocation, development and promotion framework
- Favour continuing employment over casual or fixed-term employment
- Employ academics on a teaching and research basis as a norm
- Provide leadership skills development to all our leaders on an on-going basis
- Reintroduce research (sabbatical) leave when circumstances permit
- Undertake more social team building and community building events
- Investigate the provision of one free unit per semester for staff

## Improve our Systems and Processes

There is currently a large amount of frustration with our systems and processes. Starting with the appointment of a Chief Experience Officer, we will focus on the experience of our students and staff in using and navigating through our systems and processes, with the intention of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of how we do things, while at the same time enhancing the experience of those who interact with us. As part of this process, we will endeavour to:

- Provide people with critical tools, processes and systems to thrive
- Provide appropriate professional support linked to academic units
- Integrate our systems and use them to their capacity
- Improve digital capability across the student journey
- Simplify processes and reduce the number of layers of authorisation

## Develop and Enhance our Facilities

We are fortunate to have an extensive, beautiful, bushland campus, with architecture that reflects our Australianess. The design of Boola Katitjin, our new academic building, exemplifies our commitment to the environment and blends well with our older architecture, providing a model for the future development of the South St campus. However, many of our buildings and facilities are now showing their age, and we need to invest strategically in upgrading our campuses. In particular, we intend to:

- Update the campus development plan to support the themes and to be porous
- Develop the Gateway site and link with the hospital precinct
- Upgrade facilities and buildings generally across our campuses, including laboratories and underlying technologies
- Engage disciplines with campus planning
- Further develop the campus student village



# Size, Shape and Approach to Financial Management

Murdoch University has invested in Boola Katitjin, which will accommodate up to 60% of our current teaching and learning activities once it opens for Semester 1 2023. Our effective full time student load in 2022 is just under 10,000. By 2030 we anticipate having an effective full time student load of 15,000, of which approximately 40% will be international students who demonstrate the level of skills, knowledge and experience to successfully complete their chosen course. We anticipate on-going growth of approximately 3% in both domestic and international student cohorts post 2030 based on continuing growth in demand for higher education in our areas of speciality.

We anticipate retaining and growing our current academic disciplines, updating and changing course offerings in response to the developing world, and introducing niche courses that align with the strategic themes described in this Strategy where there is demand. We have co-designed a new academic structure that will support the delivery of this Strategy, empowering academic schools to identify and pursue opportunities that align with the Strategy.

From 2024, we will aim to generate an annual surplus of 5%, that will in turn be invested into the physical and digital infrastructure of the University. While expenditure budgets will be approved annually, we will put in place a rolling five-year budgeting process. Underpinning this process will be a budget model that returns 40% of additional revenue over and above a set baseline to the academic schools in expenditure budget.

Recognising that the interaction between academics and students is fundamental to our purpose, we will seek to balance the ratio of academic staff and professional staff over the period of the Strategy, and we will aim to spend 60% of our revenue on staff salaries.







## Executing Our Strategy

This overarching Strategy document will guide our planning and budgeting through to 2030. A separate strategy will be developed for each Strategic Theme, Core Activity and Enabler, aligning with and complementing this Strategy. These sub-strategies will specify additional objectives, actions and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the relevant area. Each academic and operational area will develop their own rolling five-year plans to contribute towards the objectives identified here. The Senior Leadership Team will have oversight of the development and implementation of these plans.

The University Leadership Team will meet twice yearly to review progress against the Strategy and consider any adjustments that should be needed. Senate will review progress at the annual Senate Strategy Day in a workshop attended by the University Leadership Team.

## Measuring Our Success

As finding metrics to measure progress against the individual objectives we set out in this Strategy is challenging, we will measure our overall progress towards our vision through the following KPIs. For each performance indicator we will analyse our past performance and the performance of comparator institutions, and then we will agree targets for each with Senate. Whilst our Senate will continue to monitor our performance and sustainability from financial and governance perspectives, progress of our Strategy will be measured through the following KPIs:

- Student satisfaction (Student experience surveys, overall satisfaction % positive responses)
- Reputation (RepTrak reputation score)
- Staff satisfaction (Staff engagement survey, overall satisfaction % positive responses)
- Proportion of First Nations students (as a percentage of domestic student cohort)
- Student progression (% commencing students successfully completing a Murdoch course)
- Number of research publications (in Scival with Murdoch address)
- Net carbon emissions of operations
- Proportion of waste going to land fill

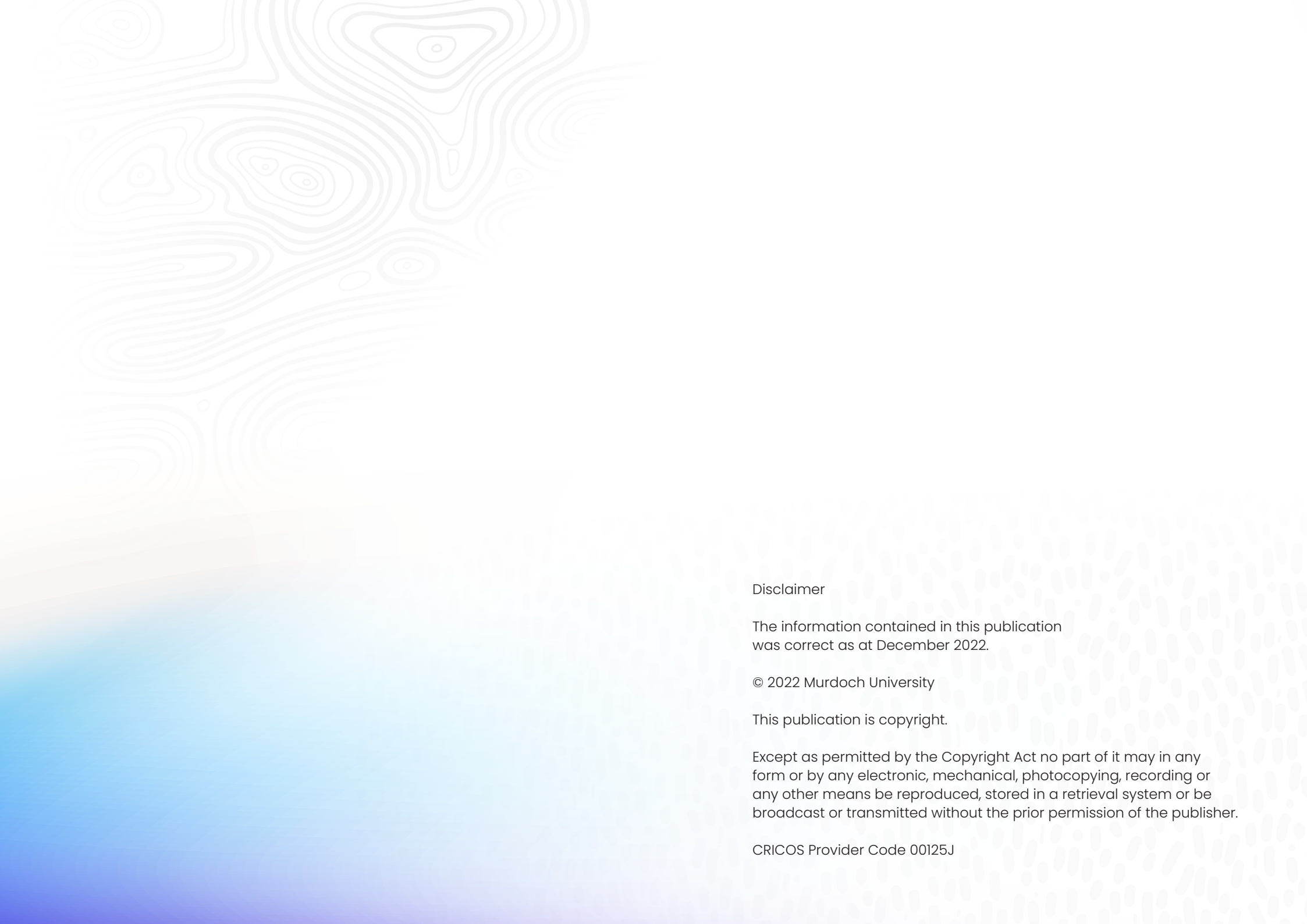
# Looking Forward

While the challenges facing our species and our world are considerable, Murdoch University is ideally placed to contribute to the solution of those challenges, while enabling our students and staff to realise their potential.

Through this Strategy, we restate our commitment to values and causes that are fundamental to the identity of the University: the environment, conservation and sustainability; equality, diversity and inclusion and social justice; and First Nations peoples, cultures and knowledges.

We are committing to creating the Murdoch University of the future, built on the foundations of the past, but embracing the advances in technology, understandings and approaches that have happened in recent times and that will continue to evolve through the period of this Strategy.

We look forward to working with our students, our staff, our alumni, our supporters and our global and local partners in pursuing our shared purpose and the vision we have set out here.



#### Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication was correct as at December 2022.

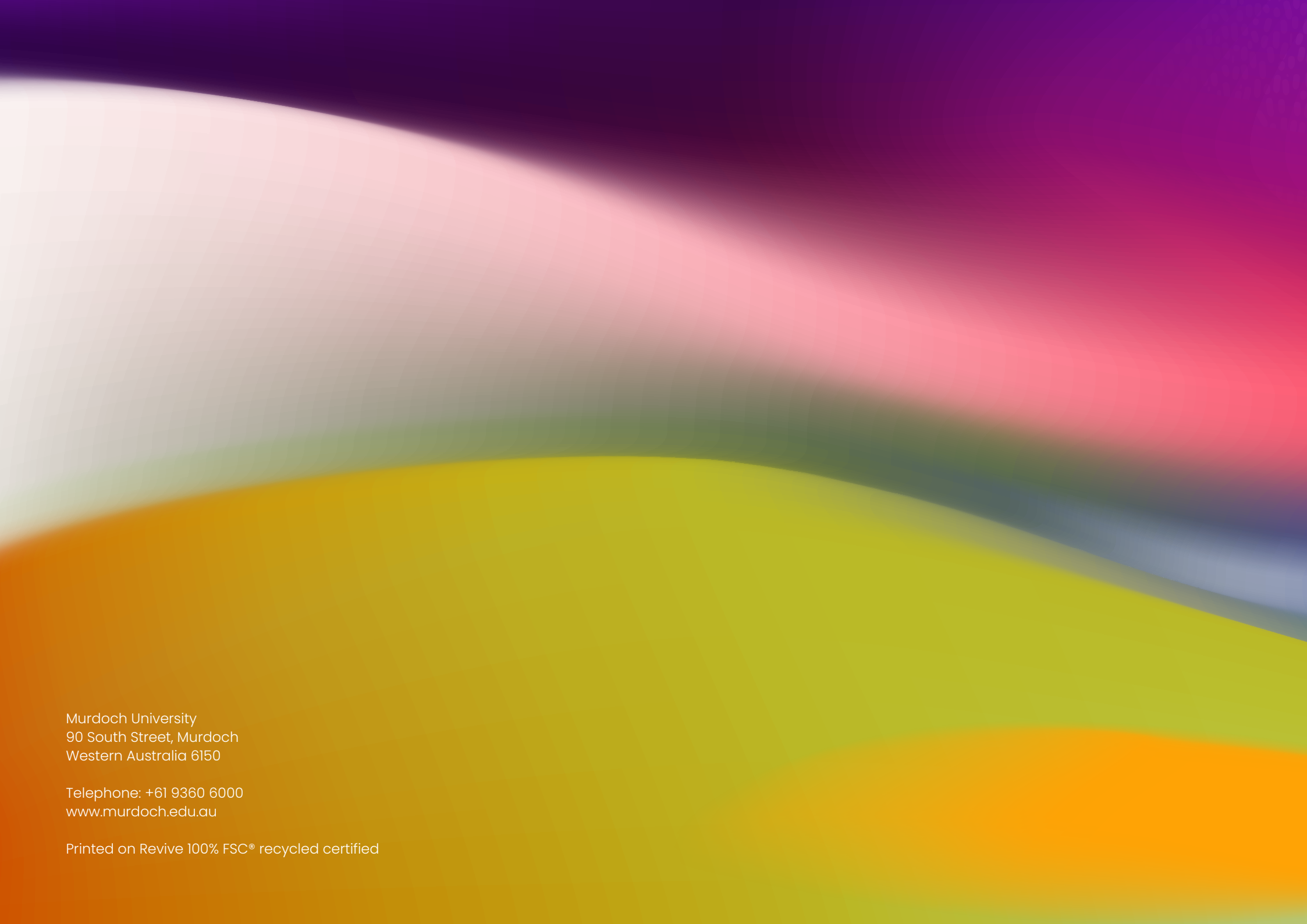
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Murdoch University  
90 South Street, Murdoch  
Western Australia 6150

Telephone: +61 9360 6000  
[www.murdoch.edu.au](http://www.murdoch.edu.au)

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