



Natural  
**Hazards  
Research**  
Australia

# Call for Expressions of Interest

## First Nations Research Scholarship Program

Expressions of Interest due **5:00pm AEDT, 6 November 2024**  
to [research@naturalhazards.com.au](mailto:research@naturalhazards.com.au)



Australian Government

[naturalhazards.com.au](http://naturalhazards.com.au)

Australia's leading research centre for natural  
hazard resilience and disaster risk reduction

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## Overview

Natural Hazards Research Australia (hereafter the Centre) is seeking Expressions of Interest from universities to host and contribute to the Centre's First Nations Research Scholarship Program:

In brief: First Nations Research Scholarship Program

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### Program description

This Expression of Interest (EOI) process invites all Australian universities to respond as to how they will host and deliver a First Nations Research Scholarship Program (Scholarship Program) with Natural Hazards Research Australia (the Centre).

The Scholarship Program structure has been co-designed with First Nations leaders and academics using a Research Scholar-centred approach. The EOI submissions will document how their established research training and scholarship arrangements can deliver the Centre's top-up contributions (i.e., stipends and research support) to support First Nations Research Scholar pathways to higher degree research (HDR) completion ('pathways').

The EOI submissions will address the range of potential Research Scholar pathways, including entry at any point from final year undergraduate (Honours or equivalent with a research component), through to the final year of doctoral studies. The Scholarship Program will facilitate Research Scholars pursuing pathways in accordance with the requirements of the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) for education and training.

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### University selection and expectations

The Centre is seeking to appoint one or more universities to host the Scholarship Program and deliver the top-up contributions specified in this EOI, through a Framework Agreement. The successful university/ies will support at least one First Nations Research Scholars over the duration of their pathways. The Centre currently has scope to support up to two Research Scholars.

The Centre also offers each First Nations Scholar in the Scholarship Program the opportunity to apply for other funds, including an industry placement and First Nations community engagement support, as additional options (i.e., separate to this EOI).

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### Scholarship/s management

Through the Framework Agreement, the successful university/ies will be responsible for the recruitment, selection and management of the Research Scholars. The Centre will pay the top-up contributions to the host university/ies, who will manage payments to the Research Scholars. The Centre will participate in the design and implementation of the research projects in an advisory capacity, supporting the scoping, reporting and promotion of the project/s. The Framework Agreement and top-up contributions will commence in 2025.

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**Duration and contributions budget**

The duration of each scholarship will depend on the Research Scholars' pathways, with the following Centre top-up contributions (including stipend and research support) per Research Scholar:

- **Undergraduate** (AQF8 Honours or equivalent with a research component that meets the requirements for commencing a doctoral qualification) – Up to one year FTE, up to \$20,000 stipend and \$3,000 research support (Total maximum: \$23,000).
- **Graduate Diploma in Research Studies** (AQF8, which meets the requirements for commencing a doctoral qualification) – Up to two years FTE, up to \$30,000/year stipend and \$3,000/year research support (Total maximum: \$66,000)
- **Masters by Research** (AQF9, which meets the requirements for commencing a doctoral qualification) – Up to two years FTE, up to \$30,000/year stipend and \$3,000/year research support (Total maximum: \$66,000).
- **Doctoral Qualification** (AQF10, including PhD and Professional Doctorate) – Up to four years FTE, up to \$30,000/year stipend and \$3,000/year research support (Total maximum: \$132,000).

The following additional Centre support can also be applied for by Research Scholars engaged in this Scholarship Program (see Centre contributions):

- **Industry placement** – Up to five months during PhD study, up to \$14,500 at a mutually agreed time during candidature.
- **First Nations community engagement support** – For the duration of the Scholar's pathway experience, up to \$20,000 to support and remunerate community contributions to the research.
- **Early Career Researcher Development Fellowships** – During the Scholar's pathway experience, including networking opportunities, mentoring, promotion of research and connection into the Centre's knowledge network. Up to \$15,000 is available to full-time PhD students who have successfully completed two years of full-time study.

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**Centre contact**

For any questions regarding this Call for EOIs, please email [research@naturalhazards.com.au](mailto:research@naturalhazards.com.au).

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**Submission of EOI**

EOIs must be up to 10 pages, addressing scholarship propositions and evaluation criteria (as outlined in this EOI). EOIs are to be submitted to [research@naturalhazards.com.au](mailto:research@naturalhazards.com.au) by **5:00pm AEDT, 6 November 2024**.

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# Statement of requirements

## Background and context

The motivation and idea for this scholarship originated with Dr Richard Thornton who was the Director of the Bushfire CRC, the CEO of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC and the inaugural CEO of Natural Hazards Research Australia. In each of these leadership roles, Dr Thornton was a great supporter of First Nations researchers and their significant contribution to knowledge and understanding.

The Centre recognises the accumulated knowledges, relationships, obligations and knowledge systems that First Nations Peoples have with Country. The Centre committed as part of its [Biennial Research Plan 2024-26](#), to support First Nations research scholars by applying a decolonised First Nations lens ([Costello & Neale, 2023](#)). The Centre also recognises that First Nations people face some of the most significant barriers to participation in and leadership of natural hazards research.

To inform the design of the Scholarship Program and a wider roadmap that underpins our relationship with and support of First Nations scholars at the Centre, a workshop was held with First Nations representatives and members of the Centre's Education and Training Committee (including representatives of Griffith University, Monash University and RMIT University). Reflecting on workshop discussions and priorities raised, it was decided that jointly funded Centre-University scholar support arrangements would be the most effective way to ensure the best stipend and research support arrangements for First Nations Research Scholars. This resourcing and support is intended to foster the development of research and leadership skills and allow all stakeholders (i.e. the Research Scholars, their community, the university supervising the candidates, placement participant organisation/s and the Centre), the opportunity to better understand and appreciate First Nations knowledge systems, cultural practices and knowledge acquisition.

The subsequent Research Scholar-centred design approach adopted for this Scholarship Program:

1. provides incentive for the Research Scholars to complete the pathway to attaining a higher degree research qualification
2. facilitates opportunities for the Research Scholars to engage with industry placements
3. enables the Research Scholars to fulfil cultural needs for themselves and their community.

Each Scholarship Program will establish a long-term pathway for First Nations scholars to develop skills and undertake research in alignment with the Centre's key research focus areas and the key capability areas, as listed in the *Biennial Research Plan 2024-26*. This will include the active identification and encouragement of potential Research Scholars from various life stages and backgrounds and the consideration of, and focus on their specific needs, community relationships and objectives.

The Centre anticipates that research delivered by Research Scholars will be suitable for communicating and sharing in an array of potential outlets spanning community-related artifacts, academic journals, industry magazines and online articles, as culturally appropriate.

## Host university contributions

The host university is expected to provide at least their standard research scholarship arrangements for the duration of the Scholarship Program support for First Nations Research Scholars. This includes for doctoral scholarships, using at least the full-time maximum Research Training Program (RTP) rate (i.e., \$50,291).

## Centre contributions

The Centre will top-up existing university stipend (living allowance) and research support (for expenses such as travel, data collection, data transcription etc) in accordance with the following schedule and administered by the scholarship host university:

- **Undergraduate** (AQF8 Honours or equivalent with a research component that meets the requirements for commencing a doctoral qualification) – Up to one year FTE, up to \$20,000 stipend and \$3,000 research support (Total maximum: \$23,000).
- **Graduate Diploma** in Research Studies (AQF8, which meets the requirements for commencing a doctoral qualification) – Up to two years FTE, up to \$30,000/year stipend and \$3,000/year research support (Total maximum: \$66,000).
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The following additional Centre support can also be applied for by Research Scholars engaged in this Scholarship Program:

- **Industry placement** – Up to five months during PhD study, up to \$14,500 at a mutually agreed time during candidature.
- **First Nations community engagement support** – For the duration of the Scholar's pathway experience, up to \$20,000 to support and remunerate community contributions to the research.
- **Early Career Researcher Development Fellowships** – During the Scholar's pathway experience, including networking opportunities, mentoring, promotion of research and connection into the Centre's knowledge network. Up to \$15,000 is available to full-time PhD students who have successfully completed two years of full-time study.

\* Please note: These options are administered by the Centre separately to this EOI and are a contribution from the Centre's total contribution in supporting the First Nations Research Scholarship Program.

## Scholarship program guidelines

The Scholarship Program will be managed through a Framework Agreement between the Centre and the successful university/ies. The following guidelines will be reflected within the Framework Agreement, in addition to the propositions outlined in the Submission Requirements:

**The Scholarship Program must:**

1. encompass and support First Nations knowledge systems, cultural practices and knowledge acquisition through the application of a culturally appropriate decolonised research framework as outlined by [Costello & Neale \(2023\)](#)
2. provide support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community research priorities, building research capacity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and using culturally appropriate ways to share research findings
3. connect to, acknowledge and remunerate whole-of-community and Elder contributions to each scholarship holder's research project in the spirit of reciprocity. This will be supported by the Centre's First Nations community engagement support (see Centre contributions)
4. be promoted and supported in liaison with the Centre and in consultation with the Centre's First Nations research community.

**The Host University/ies must:**

1. offer research pathways beginning at any point from undergraduate through to the final year of a higher degree research (HDR) qualification
2. be able to show how their research training programs support First Nations candidates
3. demonstrate how they are already/will work with First Nations stakeholders to better understand the needs and requirements of First Nations Research Scholars and co-design an effective and relevant approach to research and research leadership development that meets these needs and requirements
4. manage a Scholarship Program Management Committee (SPMC) which is co-designed (Centre/university) to implement a culturally appropriate ecosystem of support for Research Scholars. Key aspects of the SPMC include:
  - design of the Terms of Reference and establishment process with First Nations stakeholders
  - involvement of a Centre staff mentor to ensure that support and resources are provided to the scholars on a focused and timely basis
  - involvement of research and industry mentors from Centre research projects and industry partner organisations. Where possible mentors will be First Nations researchers and practitioners
  - designing and implementing additional and culturally appropriate university research training programs and support where applicable.
5. manage the Research Scholar Assessment Committee (RSAC), to assess Research Scholar applications. Key aspects of the RSAC include:
  - design of the Terms of Reference and establishment process with First Nations stakeholders
  - involvement of at least one First Nations person and one Centre representative in an advisory role
  - ensuring that all potential Research Scholars identify as First Nations from Australia inclusive of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples
  - using a merit-based process that jointly considers First Nations researcher and community contributions in areas of research leadership, governance, principles and protocols and university processes and timings.
6. involve a Centre representative to be part of each Research Scholar's supervisory team, for each research project in their research pathway
7. ensure that any industry placement that may be facilitated by the Centre for a Scholar can be accommodated throughout the term of the scholarship.

## Hosting and implementation process

The hosting and implementation process will involve the following key steps for the successful university/ies:

- Upon assessment and selection of the university/ies to host the Scholarship Program/s it is expected that they will work with the Centre to contract the arrangement, including finalising the Framework Agreement.
- Once contracted, it is expected that the university/ies will form the Scholarship Program Management Committee (SPMC) to implement the Scholarship Program.
- The host university/ies will then call for Research Scholar applicants, including advertising in an open call across Australia and promotion by First Nations researchers and their networks to potential applicants.
- The host university/ies will form a Research Scholar Assessment Committee to select each Research Scholar, which will include a representative from the Centre.
- Upon selection of the Research Scholar/s, it is expected that the host university/ies will work with the Centre and the Scholar/s to form the supervisory team/s, co-design their research program and monitor and support progress.
- At the conclusion of a Research Scholar's pathway, the Centre and the host university have the opportunity to consider recruiting another Research Scholar.

## Expected outputs

- Research scoping and work plan documents that are aligned with the Centre's research priorities and which include project timelines and resourcing plans.
- Annual pathway progress updates to the Scholarship Program Management Committee, prepared by the Research Scholar/s and signed by the Primary Supervisor of their research projects.
- Periodic culturally appropriate presentations to the Scholarship Program Management Committee and at the Centre's annual research forum.
- Research reporting, including undergraduate (Hons) research reports, Graduate Diploma, Masters by Research and doctoral dissertations.
- Publications and other recordings of research findings as culturally appropriate.

## Anticipated outcomes

This Scholarship Program supports First Nations scholarships and research training objectives towards safer, more resilient and sustainable communities in Australia. It also seeks to identify, develop and provide opportunities and support for First Nations researchers as leaders in the disaster research community.

## Quality control and reporting

The Scholarship Program will be overseen and supported by a Scholarship Program Management Committee (SPMC), with the assessment of Research Scholar applications by the Research Scholar Assessment Committee (RSAC). The composition of the SPMC and RSAC will be determined by the host university/ies, in liaison with the Centre and First Nations stakeholders.

Reports and research outputs must be submitted to the Centre for review and comment in an advisory capacity, as culturally appropriate.



To further assist with quality assurance, it is expected that:

- the SPMC will develop a culturally appropriate communications plan for the Research Scholars and their projects, which details the timing and purpose of SPMC meetings to be held
- supervisory teams will use a consultative approach, aligned with [Costello & Neale \(2023\)](#)
- the scholarship holders will give periodic presentations to key stakeholder groups to gain feedback on project progress.

Additional quality control processes may be agreed as part of the establishment of the Scholarship Program.

## Contractual arrangements

The successful University/ies will enter into a Framework Agreement with the Centre, which allows for multiple Research Scholars to be awarded research scholarships. Initially, the Centre will support two Research Scholars in total, with an option for additional scholars on agreement between the Centre and the University/ies.

A copy of the Framework Agreement for the First Nations Research Scholarship Program is attached. The Centre reserves its rights to make amendments to the form of contract.

**This contract should be reviewed by applicants as part of the EOI submission.**

If you would like to request amendments to any of the terms and conditions set out in the proposed form of contract, details of the proposed changes and the reason the changes are requested must be included in the EOI submission. Requests for any changes will be at the sole discretion of the Centre.

Selection as a shortlisted or preferred provider does not give rise to a contract (expressed or implied) between the shortlisted or preferred provider and the Centre for the supply of goods or services. No legal relationship will exist between the Centre and the shortlisted or preferred provider until a binding contract in writing is executed by both parties.

# Submitting an Expression of Interest

## Review process

After the closing date, the Centre will review submitted EOIs against the propositions and evaluation criteria below. The evaluation criteria provide an indication of matters that should be addressed in the EOI Submission.

### Key dates

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<b>25 September 2024</b>	Call for EOIs opens
<b>6 November 2024</b>	Due date for EOIs

## Submission requirements for this EOI

The submission must be no more than 10 pages. Please provide details of the submitting institution and contact details including: 1) name of the submitter 2) department, faculty or Centre 3) email and telephone contact 4) mailing address.

Universities must prepare their response to this EOI addressing the Scholarship Program Guidelines and the following propositions and evaluation criteria.

### Propositions

The submission must include details of how the university would incorporate the following propositions within the Scholarship Program:

- Flexible entry pathways to research programs and a long-term vision for First Nations researcher careers.
  - Establishment and conduct of a First Nations Research Scholarship Assessment Committee (RSAC) that includes at least one First Nations person as well as a representative from the Centre.
  - Establishment of a culturally appropriate communications plan for the successful scholarship candidates and their projects.
  - Incorporation and observance of the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Researchers.
  - Development of awareness and skills in First Nations Knowledge Systems, cultural practices and knowledge acquisition.
  - Development of additional and culturally appropriate programs and support for the Research Scholars (where and when necessary) i.e. additions to the research ecosystem.
  - Design of culturally safe and appropriate First Nations industry placements to complement the scholarship program including flexible working arrangements for the scholarship recipient.
  - Establishment of processes and resources to support the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community research priorities and capacity as well as culturally appropriate approaches for sharing First Nations research findings.
  - A process for risk management to increase the likelihood of Research Scholars continuing along their pathways within the Scholarship Program to higher degree research (HDR) completion.
  - Any requested changes to the Centre's proposed form of contract.
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## Evaluation criteria

EOI responses must highlight how the university will adhere to the scholarship design propositions as outlined in the Scholarship description section of this EOI. The Centre expects a successful EOI response will address all criteria as specified below – please ensure that criteria weighting is observed.

The Centre reserves the right not to offer the Scholarship Program, or only allocate a proportion of the available funding if a proposal does not meet the Centre’s needs. The Centre reserves the right to invite any other specific universities as it sees fit to submit proposals before or after the closing date.

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Evaluation criteria	% weighting
<b>Program entry and candidate assessment:</b> Evidence of flexible entry pathways to research programs and a long-term vision for First Nations researcher careers, including scholarship applicant assessment processes	20
<b>Project management:</b> Evidence of expertise in the establishment of a First Nations culturally appropriate: 1) supervisory team, 2) research project communication plan and 3) incorporation and observance of the Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers within the research training program.	15
<b>First Nations Knowledge systems, acquisition and cultural practice integration:</b> Evidence of expertise in the development of awareness and skills in First Nations knowledge systems, cultural practices and knowledge acquisition within the research training program.	20
<b>Support for First Nations research:</b> A strong track record of industry engagement with the ability to support and influence Australian disaster management at a national or state/territory level through interaction with key stakeholders.	15
<b>Support for the First Nations research ecosystem and work placements:</b> Evidence of expertise in how to develop additional culturally appropriate programs and support for First Nations researchers (where and when necessary) i.e. additional support programs, culturally safe processes and working arrangements that include work placements.	15
<b>Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community research priorities and capacity:</b> Evidence of processes and resources to support the development of Aboriginal Community research priorities and capacity as well as culturally appropriate approaches for sharing First Nations research findings.	15

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