



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

National Centre for Cultural Competence
In partnership with Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council and Gudida

Cultural Immersion Executive Leadership Program



11–14 August 2026

**Murrook Cultural Centre, Williamtown NSW,
Worimi Country**

*Develop the capability, knowledge,
and skills necessary to be a culturally
responsive leader*



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the tradition of custodianship and law of the Country on which the University of Sydney campuses stand. We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country.

The University's Camperdown Campus sits on the lands of the Gadigal people, with campuses, teaching and research facilities on the lands of the Gamaraygal, Dharug, Wangal, Darkinyung, Burramadagal, Dharawal, Gandangara, Gamilaraay, Barkindji, Bundjalung, Wiradjuri, Ngunawal, Gureng Gureng, and Gagadju peoples.

We also acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional custodians of Worimi Country and thank their Elders for inviting us to learn from and share their knowledge.

As we share our own knowledge, teaching, learning and research practices may we also pay respect to the knowledge embedded forever within the Aboriginal Custodianship of Country.



“The program’s guiding ethos is captured in the Murrook Cultural Centre’s motto: *Experience Murrook. Change Forever.* We encourage participants to arrive with open minds, ready to sit with discomfort as a necessary part of genuine growth and transformation.”

— Professor Gabrielle Russell, Director, National Centre for Cultural Competence

Engage & immerse

What makes this program unique?



Taking place at the Murrook Cultural Centre, delivered by Gudida, the Cultural Immersion Executive Leadership Program is not your typical executive leadership course. The program invites leaders to leave behind their familiar settings and experience Worimi Country. Here, participants engage in truth-telling, immerse themselves in Aboriginal culture, and undergo profound personal reflection, all under the guidance of Aboriginal Elders, cultural educators, and academic specialists.

It prioritises inner transformation over content delivery, and experience over instruction. It invites leaders to challenge long-held assumptions, confront uncomfortable truths about culture and history, and reflect deeply on their own identity, worldview, and leadership practice.

“The strength of Gudida lies in the bridge we have built between academic rigor and the living, breathing knowledge of Culture, Community and Country. After seven years of successful collaboration, we are proud to open this circle to external leaders. This isn't just a course; it is an invitation to step out of the 'Ego-system' and into a profound 'Eco-system' where leadership is redefined by connection and truth-telling about our shared responsibility to Mother Earth as ‘custodians together.’”

— Andrew Smith, CEO, Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council



91% of participants responded favourably to the statement that ‘the program provided tangible benefits for me both personally and professionally.’



Program experience (4-day immersion)



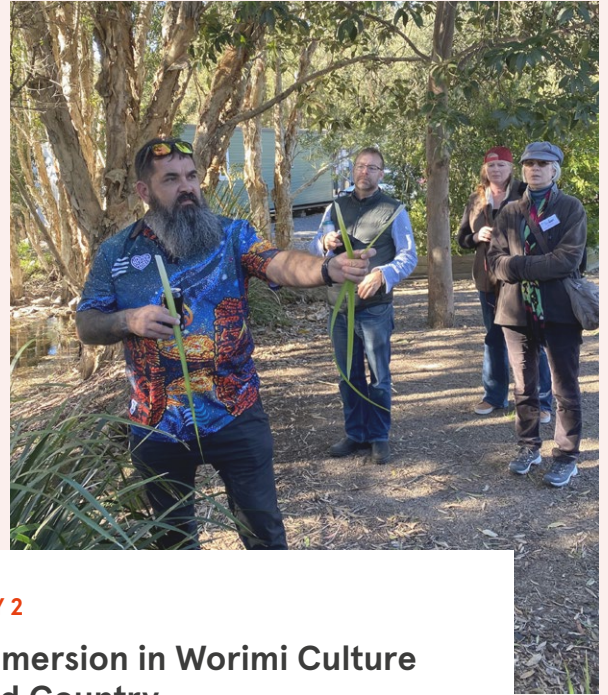
DAY 1

Foundations of Cultural Competence

Participants begin with a structured introduction to cultural competence at Murrook Cultural Centre with University of Sydney academics. The day focuses on building understanding, engaging in critical self-reflection, and exploring the leadership implications of cultural competence.

Key learning components:

- Understanding cultural competence
- Knowing self: identity, worldview, and socialisation
- Culturally competent leadership
- Cultural competence as a driver of organisational change.



DAY 2

Immersion in Worimi Culture and Country

Participants engage in cultural immersion guided by Worimi Elders and Gudida cultural educators. The day emphasises connection to Country, cultural knowledge, and hands-on experiences that activate learning through presence, practice, and observation.

Key learning components:

- Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony
- Introduction to cultural protocols (“Setting the Circle”)
- Guided site tour of Murrook parklands
- Cultural activities (weaving, boomerang throwing)
- Reflection on cultural competence in practice.

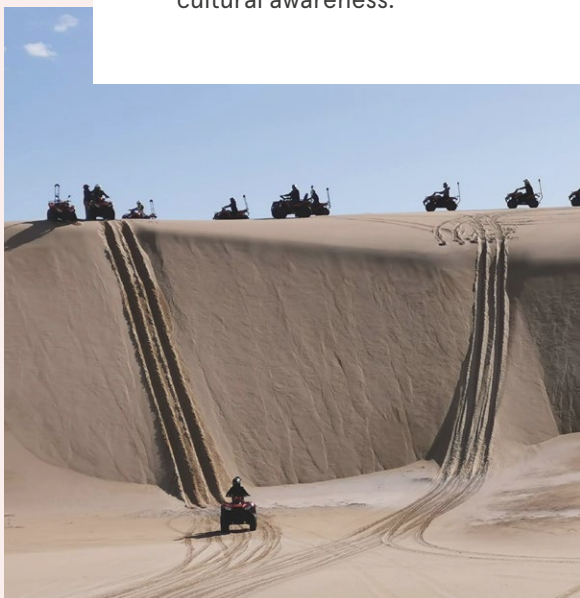


DAY 3**Connecting with Land, Story, and History**

Participants deepen their connection to land, culture, and local histories. Experiential learning across significant sites connects cultural narratives with contemporary leadership responsibilities.

Key learning components:

- Quad biking on Worimi sand dunes
- Cultural talks, Dreaming stories, and environmental knowledge
- Cultural heritage sites (Gan Gan Lookout, canoe trees)
- The Broken Journey: truth-telling on history, lived experience, and cultural awareness.

**DAY 4****Meaning Making, Integration and Closure**

The final day enables participants to integrate their learning and commit to ongoing culturally competent leadership. Elders and community members share lived experience, reinforcing the importance of relational accountability.

Key learning components:

- Smoking Ceremony and debrief of The Broken Journey
- Storytelling with Aboriginal Elders
- Making Connections: embedding cultural competence into professional practice
- Closing Circle and collective reflections.

i Please note that throughout the program the schedule may shift to allow extended focus on meaningful conversations, further storytelling, or additional time for group reflection. Unlike typical executive leadership programs, this experience prioritises personal transformation, allowing the learning process to unfold naturally. We encourage participants to arrive with open minds, ready to embrace discomfort as part of genuine growth and change.



“The truth circles in particular had an immense impact on me. Listening to lived experiences, sitting with uncomfortable truths, and reflecting on the ongoing impact of colonisation was something that I didn’t just process in the moment - it’s something I continue to carry with me. The stories shared in those spaces were raw and real, they fundamentally shifted my perspective on what it means to lead with cultural competence.”

— Participant from University of Sydney

Learning outcomes

This program builds the deep awareness, skills and confidence leaders need to create culturally responsive organisations. Participants experience learning that is personal and transformative. Insights are then translated into organisational practice, enabling leaders to influence culture, strengthen teams, and drive meaningful change.

- ✓ Gain a deeper and actionable understanding of culturally competent leadership within the Australian context, equipping you to influence and redefine organisational culture.
- ✓ Develop advanced, respectful and responsive leadership capabilities that champion Indigeneity, diversity, and difference - empowering you to lead with impact and integrity.
- ✓ Empower teams and organisations to engage in culturally responsive ways and instil ethical decision-making and mutual respect across intercultural interactions and initiatives.
- ✓ Strengthen your capacity to initiate and guide innovative cultural competence reforms and embed sustainable change in your leadership practice and workplace.
- ✓ Learn how to create more diverse and equitable environments where everyone can thrive and fostering a deep sense of shared belonging and purpose.



83% of alumni surveyed responded favourably to the statement that the program has changed their approach to leadership and/or their practice.

Impact for organisations

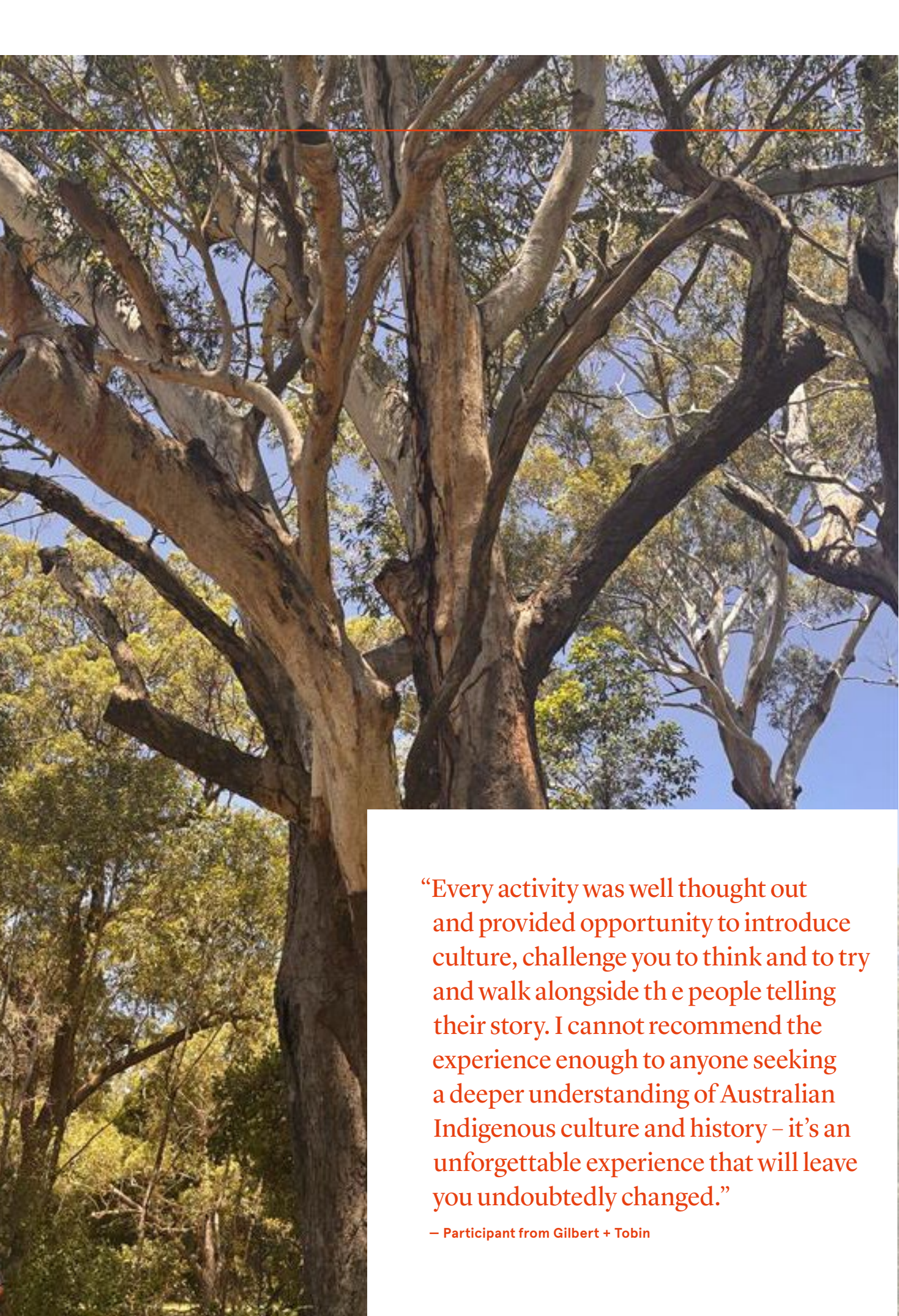


This program enables leaders to not just learn about cultural competence, but to live it. Bringing new insights, authenticity and responsibility into their leadership practice and their organisation. The learning journey equips leaders to:

- ✓ Model and shape culturally responsive leadership behaviours that strengthen trust and psychological safety within organisational culture.
- ✓ Empower teams to engage respectfully with diverse communities and cultural contexts.
- ✓ Integrate cultural responsiveness into organisational systems, strategy, and decision-making.
- ✓ Elevate reconciliation as a lived organisational value rather than an aspirational statement.
- ✓ Create pathways for equity and inclusion, enabling diverse staff to contribute meaningfully and thrive.
- ✓ Drive sustained cultural change, strengthening organisational trust, cohesion and capability.



85% of participants indicated that they regularly use the skills and knowledge gained from the program in their workplaces.



“Every activity was well thought out and provided opportunity to introduce culture, challenge you to think and to try and walk alongside the people telling their story. I cannot recommend the experience enough to anyone seeking a deeper understanding of Australian Indigenous culture and history – it’s an unforgettable experience that will leave you undoubtedly changed.”

– Participant from Gilbert + Tobin

National Centre for Cultural Competence

About the National Centre for Cultural Competence

At the National Centre for Cultural Competence, we lead and cultivate critical conversations about belonging and dignity that equip people to implement culturally responsive changes in themselves, their organisations, and communities. We work with other universities, government, NFPs, businesses, and community organisations to design culturally appropriate cultural competence research and education resources. Our broader perspective is forming national and international partnerships, initiating dialogues, and implementing initiatives to improve educational, economic, cultural and social outcomes throughout society.

Facilitators

Associate Professor Gabrielle Russell

Academic Director
National Centre for Cultural Competence

Dr Matthew Tyne

Academic Facilitator
National Centre for Cultural Competence

About Gudida

Gudida, which translates to family, speaks to the values that underpin this work. The Gudida team hold a vital role as stewards of the Sovereign Tree, ensuring that cultural knowledge and 'Gudida' education shared remain protected and firmly rooted in the authority of the Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council. Through Gudida, participants are invited to experience Worimi Country, reinforcing that this education is not just a commodity, but a way of living and learning that bridges the gap between knowing and true knowledge.

Facilitators

Justin Ridgeway

Culture, Heritage and Education Manager
Gudida, Murrook Cultural Centre

Peter Detourbet

Cultural Educator
Gudida, Murrook Cultural Centre





“The Cultural Immersion Experience at Murrook and facilitated by Gabrielle and Matt from Sydney University was a moving, challenging and incredibly thought-provoking time on Worimi Country. After important workshops on cultural competence, there is rich culture, storytelling, history and tradition shared by Justin and Peter as well as other community members and elders.”

- Participant from Gilbert + Tobin

Who should apply?

This program is designed for individuals who:

Are eager to engage with innovative discourse about culturally competent leadership.

Demonstrate a commitment to transformative change, both within themselves and their organisations, and are willing to critically reflect, question assumptions, and embrace learning that fosters genuine growth.

Hold leadership roles or serve as key influencers, who recognise the importance of shaping inclusive environments, modelling cultural competence, and mentoring others.

Possess a strong desire to drive cultural competence initiatives, seeking to embed cultural responsiveness throughout their workplaces and communities.

Wish to gain practical skills and confidence to champion cultural competence in both personal and professional contexts, addressing issues of systemic inequality and promoting lasting positive impact.

How to apply

Visit our website at short-courses.sydney.edu.au/course/CIEL and select the 'apply' button.

More information

If you have any further questions about the program or applying, please contact the NCCC team via email nccc@sydney.edu.au

Limited spaces

We encourage early applications. We will review submissions and make offers to suitable candidates on a rolling basis.

The investment



TIME COMMITMENT

- 4 days (Tuesday 11 August – Friday 14 August)
- Optional pre-reading

PROGRAM COSTS

\$8,690 (including GST)*

INCLUDED IN THE COST

- All workshops and workshop material
- Three nights' single occupation accommodation
- All meals during the workshops and the retreat
- All activities at the Murrook Cultural Centre
- Return transportation from Sydney to Murrook Cultural Centre (you can self-drive if that is preferred)

*Discounts available for those working for not-for-profit organisations and University of Sydney Alumni. Please contact nccc@sydney.edu.au for more information on discounts available.



79% of participants indicated that they took specific steps to enhance cultural competence in their work area after doing the program.



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