WEHI Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship

This FAQs document respectfully refers to the First Nations Peoples of Australia as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, Indigenous peoples, and First Nations peoples.

# FAQs

## What is a Fellowship?

This is a high-level description of your work, outlining the problem you are tackling and how you plan to approach the work. Aim for less than 200 words in this section and use bullet points to make it easier for the reader to grasp what it is your project is doing.

For all requests for information in this pitch, type your responses in the text box provided.

A fellowship is a short-term, funded, opportunity for advanced study, research, or professional development. It provides focused training and experience in a specific field, often involving research, practical application, or mentorship.

## What is genomics?

Genomics is the study of an organism’s entire genome (complete set of genes), their interactions, and inheritance pattern over time. At WEHI, genomics focuses on the human genome. Technologies are applied to understand how genes function, interact with each other and the environment, and how these interactions impact our traits and health.

Genomics takes a broader approach than genetics, which focuses on one or a few genes, and looks at the complete set of genetic instructions within a cell, person, or sample.

## What is ALIGN?

The Australian Alliance for Indigenous Genomics – also referred to as [ALIGN](https://indigenousgenomics.com.au/) – is a purposeful alliance between community, health, research, government, and industry that privileges Indigenous leadership and sovereignty. ALIGN’s aim is to deliver equity and benefit to Indigenous Australians through genomics. ALIGN is led by international leader, clinician, and researcher Professor Alex Brown (Yuin Nation), Professor of Indigenous Genomics at The Kids Research Institute Australia and The Australian National University (ANU) and the Director of the National Centre of Indigenous Genomics at the ANU.

## What would a typical day look like?

The role is designed to be flexible and cater to the successful candidate’s skills.   
For more information about what the fellowship could look like for you, contact [indigenousfellowships@wehi.edu.au](mailto:indigenousfellowships@wehi.edu.au).

## Who will I be working with?

The successful applicant will join a project team led by [Dr Vanessa Bryant](https://www.wehi.edu.au/researcher/vanessa-bryant/) and work closely with [Dr Charlotte Slade](https://www.wehi.edu.au/researcher/charlotte-slade/). Vanessa and Charlotte are Chief Investigators (CI) for ALIGN.   
The successful applicant will be supported by Miss Belle Hart (Aboriginal, ALIGN Victoria Program Coordinator), Professor Misty Jenkins AO (Gunditjmara, ALIGN CI), Ms Louise Lyons (Jaadwa, ALIGN CI), and Professor Clara Gaff (ALIGN CI).

## What is the project focus?

The project focuses on understanding and applying advanced genomic and multi-omic technologies to support successful diagnoses for patients, Indigenous patients, with rare immune conditions.

## What sort of prior experience would I need?

Applicants should have an understanding of science in any research or clinical (medicine or allied health) field and have had exposure to a laboratory environment.   
Applicants must be post-graduate.

## Do I need to have a PhD?

A PhD is not required to be considered for this fellowship position.

## Do I need to have expertise or experience in genomics?

Applicants are not required to have expertise or experience in genomics.

## Do I need to be a scientist or a clinician?

Applicants should have an understanding of science in any research or clinical (medicine or allied health) field.

## Do I need to be based in Melbourne?

Not necessarily. A bespoke work schedule can be discussed i.e. fly-in, fly-out agreement, supported by flexible funding of up to $300,000 over a two-year period. This would be reviewed and actioned on a case-by-case basis.

## Can I work remotely?

Yes. A bespoke work schedule, including remote work and work from home arrangements, can be discussed.

## Is there funding available?

Yes. Flexible funding of up to $300,000 over a two-year period ($150,000 pa) is available. Funding can support relocation, travel, stipend, skills, and professional development.

## Do I need to identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

Yes. This is an identified role and aims to build the capability and leadership of deadly Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers.

## What if I don’t have strong connections with my Community?

Your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage is something that is personal to you and WEHI recognises that your understanding, relationship with Community, and identity will be influenced by many factors. In advertising this position WEHI also recognises both the importance of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher to facilitate the work of ALIGN, and the role that WEHI can play in supporting the pipeline of Indigenous researchers.

* We therefore ask that you provide some information about your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage.  While assessing Indigeneity is a complex and challenging process, we want to encourage any Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person applying for this position to do so in a way that is appropriate to them and their journey.
* Example information could include:
  + A letter signed by the Chairperson of an incorporated Indigenous organisation;
  + A confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent document executed by an Indigenous organisation; or
  + A statutory declaration confirming that the applicant is:
    - Of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent; and
    - Identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; and
    - Is accepted by their community as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
  + A statutory declaration using language and/or statements appropriate to you
  + A phone conversation with the ALIGN Program Coordinator.

## What opportunities and support are available for mob at WEHI?

WEHI is committed to its reconciliation journey, including building the pipeline of First Nations medical researchers. Our First Nations Staff and Student Network (FNN) currently has around 14 members who meet regularly and are represented on both the Reconciliation Committee and Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee.

The FNN have close relationships with Murrup Barak – the University of Melbourne unit dedicated to supporting First Peoples to access higher education and study. Murrup Barak works with all areas of the University, providing advice and guidance to support cultural safety, equity, and respect for First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing.

The WEHI Reconciliation Committee (RC) is an important governance group overseeing the organisations Reconciliation Action Plan and supporting the Executive to increase the capability and capacity to work respectfully with First Nations peoples in line with our strategic objectives. The RC is Co-Chaired by a member of the research and professional service staff and is responsible for organizing events to recognize National Reconciliation and NAIDOC Weeks. The RC are acutely focused on building the foundations needed for sustainable and genuine change that recognizes, respects and values First Nations peoples, their knowledge and lived experience.

## Meet some of the WEHI mob

Proud Gunditjmara woman and immunologist specializing in brain cancer, [Professor Misty Jenkins AO](https://www.wehi.edu.au/researcher/misty-jenkins/), is a WEHI Laboratory Head and member of the ALIGN Victorian Node team. Misty’s research has advanced the cancer immunotherapy frontier through her program’s discoveries of unique brain cancer targets. A mentor and role model, Misty actively promotes Indigenous representation and gender equity in STEM.

Wayne Cawthorne is a Warrungu, Djiru, and Jirrbal Murri originally from Townsville in North Queensland, and is currently a PhD student at WEHI and Convenor of the institute’s First Nations Staff and Student Network (FNN). Wayne’s research focuses on the cell signalling that promotes cell death and inflammation, how these signalling pathways can drive inflammatory diseases, and how the Z-nucleic acid sensing protein ZBP1 contributes to these processes.

Peneeyt Thanampool Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Dr Rachel Joyce, is a proud Koori person of Wayilwan descent and a cancer and stem cell biologist.  Rachel’s research explores novel, targeted approaches to cancer prevention with a focus on health equity.

Matt Coffey is a proud Wiradjuri man who grew up on Arrernte Country in Alice Springs. Matt is the Program Manager for the DeadlyScience partnership at WEHI – a STEM immersion program for First Nations secondary students. Matt is also studying a Bachelor of Applied Mathematics and Statistics at RMIT.

Belle Hart is a proud Aboriginal woman, with ties to Ngarrindjeri Country and Jawoyn Country. Belle is the Victorian Program Coordinator for ALIGN. In this role, Belle leads the development of a National Immunogenomics Roadmap to Benefit, a strategy to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have access to, and received benefit from, immunogenomics science and medicine.

For more information and further queries, please contact [indigenousfellowships@wehi.edu.au](mailto:indigenousfellowships@wehi.edu.au).