

Newsletter June 2026

Director Update

Welcome to another edition of the Harmony Centre's newsletter. Over the past few months there has been lots of activity, including talks and events as well as additions to our Wallumattagal Living Lab data collections. We are also pleased to support the University's ongoing commitment to the Biodiversity Council of Australia and the International Universities Climate Alliance.

Our Harmony community continues to grow and we warmly welcome new members Dr Briardo Llorente, Dr Justine Lloyd, Professor Kate Lloyd (see this issue's Researcher Spotlight!), Distinguished Professor Ian Paulsen and Dr Miriam Williams. We also wish Dr Anthony Waddle all the best in his important work on endangered species as he moves to UNSW later this month.

This will be my last newsletter as Director of the Harmony Centre as I will be retiring from my university position in July. I am very pleased that Professor Peter Davies will be taking on the Directorship and I look forward to seeing the Centre grow from strength to strength in its critically important mission to support a nature-positive future.

Best wishes,

Michelle Leishman

Centre Activities

King's Foundation Australia, Hillview Estate Projects

On Wednesday, 13 May 2026, Macquarie University students from the Environmental consultancy unit, visited the King's Foundation Australia Hillview Estate. The unit requires students to develop projects for a variety of clients. Four students worked on the Hillview Estate, to develop recommendations and proposals for fauna and flora assessment of the site, sustainable development strategies, sustainable management practices, and evaluation of visitor wellbeing.

During the visit, students had the opportunity to explore the Estate, guided by the Foundation staff. The staff shared the incredible story of Hillview and answered students' questions related to their projects. The visit began inside the building, where students learned about valuable historical objects, including handcrafted furniture and artworks from when



Photo courtesy of Camila Fernandez Nion

the Estate was the NSW Governor's residence. Students also explored the surrounding land, including remnants of orchards, gardens, sports facilities, and the natural rivulet that borders the property. This allowed them to become more familiar with the site's current conditions and the plans and vision that the Foundation is working towards.

Camila Fernandez Nion



Grey Goshawk
Photo by Tselmeg Tumendelger

Sydney Rivers Community Forum

The Sydney Rivers Community Forum, hosted by the Nature Conservation Council (NCC) was held in late May. The forum was attended by several members of the Smart Green Cities and Harmony Centres. There were about 150 people in attendance from all over Sydney, representing a wide range of community groups and organisations, especially Riverkeepers, catchment groups, river alliance and conservation groups. In the morning, an inspiring set of presentations covered stories of advocacy, conservation and rehabilitation of rivers and wetlands in the Sydney Basin. The afternoon was spent workshoping on topics including governance, protected areas, mining impacts, urban wetlands, stormwater management, community connections and culture, pollution and contamination and climate resilience and adaptation. From these workshops 3 key “asks” were developed that the NCC will take to decision-makers and governments for advocacy. The 3 “asks” are on improving governance, revising legislation particularly around the definition and recognition of rivers and wetlands in the Sydney Basin, and efforts to set guidelines for plastic pollution monitoring and reporting. The overarching “ask” is to advocate for the NorBE (Neutral or Beneficial Effect) regulatory test to be applied to all matters concerning rivers and wetlands in the Sydney Basin, not just water quality.. The event also asked attendees to contribute to an illustration on Our Living River Stories.

Professor Kirstie Fryirs



Photo courtesy of Professor Kirstie Fryirs

Big Ideas Environmental Challenge initiative

As part of World Environment Day celebrations, Professor Peter Davies gave a talk to 200 high school students as part of Blacktown City Council's Big Ideas Environmental Challenge initiative. The theme for this year was tackling the urban heat island problem. Throughout the day, teams of students developed and pitched their ideas to the council. Urban heat is a particular challenge for the residents for Western Sydney that will be exacerbated by climate change. The invitation to the event came via Marilyn Bellett Ankabibian, Coordinator Environmental Strategy and Mitigation and a former graduate of Macquarie University's Master of Sustainable Development course.

Discover Public Lecture with Dr Anthony Waddle

On a chilly winter evening in May, Dr Anthony Waddle delivered a talk entitled “A conservation biologist's dream of improving endangered species survival” as part of Macquarie University's regular *Discover* public lecture series. Attended by around 100 people, Anthony explained the horrendous impact that the global spread of the chytrid fungus has had on frog populations, with many beautiful species already becoming extinct within a very short period of time. Not only is this a tragedy in its own right, it's also a bad outcome for humans too as frog biology could hold some important outcomes for human health in the future, as scientific understanding progresses.

On the positive side of the ledger, Anthony and his colleagues have made some important breakthroughs that can help stem the carnage. The development of so-called ‘frog saunas’ built from simple cheap materials enables frogs to maintain their body temperature at slightly higher levels – enough to give them the boost needed to fight off the deadly infection *and* develop long-term resistance. This understanding has given rise to the ability to vaccinate frogs against the impact of the chytrid virus. Now, vaccinating frogs en masse is a fiddly and time-consuming business, so this is not a viable long-term solution to protecting frog species in the wild. Fortunately, Anthony has proven a more enduring solution with the use of Cas9-CRISPR technology that enables ongoing resistance to the virus that can be passed on down the generations through natural breeding.

This was an emotional talk but also uplifting and it prompted a volley of questions from the audience, particularly from younger guests who posed some incredibly insightful and thoughtful questions both during the Q&A and afterwards. If ever there was a talk to inspire a new generation of motivated young scientists, this was it!

Feargal Caley

Macquarie University, Faculty of Science and Engineering, International Engagement Manager



Green and golden bell frogs in their ‘frog saunas’
Photo by Dr Anthony Waddle

Macquarie renews three-year membership with the Biodiversity Council

Macquarie University has renewed its membership of the [Biodiversity Council](#) of Australia for a further three years, reinforcing the University's commitment to protecting and restoring nature through evidence-led research, education and collaboration. The Biodiversity Council is an independent alliance of experts working to elevate biodiversity as a national priority. By continuing its membership, Macquarie is strengthening connections between the University's research community and a broader network of scientists, practitioners and policy leaders focused on halting and reversing biodiversity loss. Macquarie's Harmony Centre Director Michelle Leishman and Professor Emerita Lesley Hughes both serve as Councillors on the Biodiversity Council.

Global Arthropod Biodiversity Monitoring Network

The Harmony Centre has joined the Centre for [Biodiversity Genomics' Global Malaise Trap Program \(GMP\)](#) through a collaboration led by Professor Anthony Chariton. As part of this international initiative, arthropod samples are collected weekly from two sites on the Macquarie University campus: a site near Macquarie Lake on the edge of Remnant Native bushland, and the Ecology Reserve adjacent to Lane Cove National Park.

Using standardised Malaise traps and DNA barcoding, the GMP documents terrestrial arthropod diversity across hundreds of sites worldwide. The Macquarie collections provide “biodiversity snapshots” of local insect communities, helping to establish a baseline for monitoring ecological change and supporting the [Nature Positive Universities](#) initiative. The data contributes to a growing global effort to understand biodiversity patterns and track environmental change through one of the planet’s most diverse and understudied groups of organisms.



First sample of the trap near the lake



Malaise trap in Ecology Reserve



Malaise trap near MQ lake

Photos by Tseltmeg Tumendelger

The International Universities Climate Alliance's #ShowYourStripes Day

The [International Universities Climate Alliance \(IUCA\)](#) brings universities together to amplify trusted climate research and improve how it is shared with decision-makers and communities. IUCA’s mission is to provide an authoritative, collective university voice on climate change science, impacts, adaptation and mitigation, and to help communicate climate research “with clarity and authority” internationally.

Show Your Stripes Day is a global campaign that will be held on Saturday 20 June 2026 to raise awareness of climate change and the urgent need for action by sharing the “warming stripes,” a visual representation of rising global temperatures over time. Further information on how you can participate is [here](#).



Upcoming Events

Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society

Hosted by the Ryde – Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society, Harmony Centre Deputy Director, **Professor Peter Davies** will give a talk on “Where have all the trees gone?” on **Sunday 21 June 2026, 2pm**. Further information is [here](#).

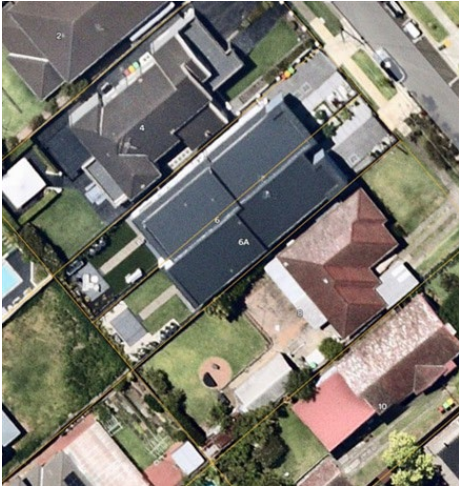


Photo courtesy of <https://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au>

Discover Public Lecture Series

Presented by the Faculty of Science and Engineering, the public lecture series is an exciting exploration of science and innovation from expert speakers. Harmony Centre researcher **Associate Professor Fatemah Salehi** will host a talk on “*Clean Energy: Why It Matters and What Comes Next.*” on **Thursday 23 July 2026, 6:15pm – 7:30pm**. Further information and registration is [here](#).



Photo courtesy of Macquarie University

Researcher Spotlight

Meet Professor Kate Lloyd



Photo courtesy of Professor Kate Lloyd

I am a Professor in Geography and Planning at Macquarie University’s School of Communication, Society and Culture. My research centres on long-term, Indigenous-led collaborations and place-based knowledges, and I take an applied, reciprocal approach to both research and teaching.

I am passionate about learning from and with Country alongside people who know place deeply. Long-term partnerships with Indigenous research collaborators, academic and practitioner colleagues have shown me how Country-centred knowledges can transform how we think about ecological care, governance, and place. The creative work we do together generates real intercultural and intergenerational exchange that benefits communities and Country.



Macquarie Students connecting to Country on campus.

Source: Kate Lloyd

My research sits at the intersection of Indigenous-led methodologies, place, and care. I work in long-term partnerships with Indigenous researchers through the [Bawaka Collective](#), [Winanga-li Gunimaa Gali collective](#), [Mittigar Network](#) and [Murama Healing Space](#). Through this relational research we have developed creative approaches to sharing knowledge about caring as Country. This work reaches broad audiences through academic outputs, public-facing [books](#), [exhibitions](#), and [storymaps](#).

I'm currently working with the [Power of Public Spaces](#) team and colleagues in the Harmony Centre to understand how Australian university campuses function as public spaces. This is especially relevant as cities densify, and universities are increasingly called on to provide access to open space for surrounding communities. We will be focusing on Macquarie University's Wallumattagal campus to learn about how this space is being used and experienced by human and more-than humans.

As part of the Power of Public Spaces project, we are also building a community storymap. We would love you to share your story of a favourite public space and contribute. You can access the survey [here](#) or feel free to get in touch if you want to know more. kate.lloyd@mq.edu.au



Image courtesy of <https://www.powerofpublicspaces.org.au/>