



2026 QUT Meanjin Oration

29 July

Cathy Freeman AC
Pride for our People





Program

MC OPENING

Kevin Yow Yeh

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Christopher McGregor

OPENING ADDRESS

Professor Wesley Enoch AM

ORATOR

Cathy Freeman AC

IN CONVERSATION

Dr Amy McQuire (Moderator)

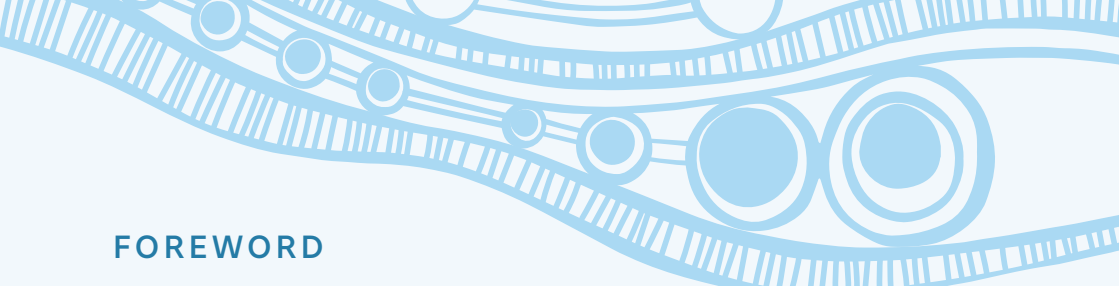
Cathy Freeman AC

VOTE OF THANKS

Vice-Chancellor and President,
Professor Margaret Sheil AO



QUT acknowledges the Turrbal and Yugara, as the First Nations owners of the lands where QUT now stands. We pay respect to their Elders, lores, customs and creation spirits. We recognise that these lands have always been places of teaching, research and learning. QUT acknowledges the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people play within the QUT community.



FOREWORD

Margaret Sheil AO

Thank you for joining us this evening for the 2026 Meanjin Oration. This event provides an important opportunity to come together to reflect, listen and learn from voices that have helped shape our nation. It invites us to consider the enduring strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the importance of truth-telling, and the role we all play in advancing a more just, inclusive and reconciled future.

It is a privilege to welcome Cathy Freeman AC as this year's Meanjin Oration speaker, centred on the theme Pride for our People. Cathy is one of Australia's most respected sporting icons, but her legacy extends far beyond athletics. Through her courage, humility and leadership, she has inspired generations of Australians and helped shape national conversations about identity and pride, while remaining deeply connected to culture, community, Country.

At QUT, we are committed to recognising and valuing Indigenous Australian knowledges, cultures and leadership as fundamental to who we are as a university. The Meanjin Oration reflects this commitment by creating a space where Indigenous voices are elevated, perspectives are broadened and meaningful conversations can take place. We are proud to host an event that celebrates Indigenous leadership and achievement while strengthening understanding across our university and the broader community.

I extend my sincere thanks to Cathy for sharing her story and insights with us this evening. I also acknowledge Professor Chelsea Watego and the Carumba Institute team for their leadership in presenting this significant event each year.

I hope tonight's conversation inspires us all to strengthen relationships, deepen understanding and continue working towards a future in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and achievements are recognised, valued and celebrated every day.



Professor Margaret Sheil AO
Vice-Chancellor and President



ORATOR

Cathy Freeman AC

Cathy Freeman is a proud Kuku Yalanji and Birri Gubba woman and one of Australia's most revered Indigenous Olympic champions. Rising from Mackay in Queensland, she made history as the first Australian Aboriginal woman to win gold at an international athletics event and went on to represent Australia at four Olympic Games.

She ran her first race when she was five and realised that she loved the way racing made her feel. She won her first gold medal at a School Athletics Championships when she was eight years old.

Her career-defining moment came at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, where she won gold in the 400 metres, carrying both the Australian and Aboriginal flags in one of the most iconic moments in Australian sporting history. A World Champion, Australian of the Year and Companion of the Order of Australia (AC), Cathy is celebrated not only for her sporting achievements but for the barriers she broke.

Since retiring, Cathy has dedicated herself to empowering young Australians through education and community initiatives and a highly respected speaker and advocate—sharing insights on resilience, leadership, identity and purpose.

Cathy Freeman was a member of the gold medal-winning 4x100m relay team at the 1990 Auckland Commonwealth Games, and in so doing became the first female Australian Aboriginal to win a gold medal at an international athletics event.



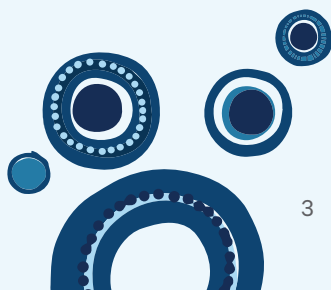
She was awarded Young Australian of the Year in 1991 and a year later in Barcelona became the first Australian Aboriginal to represent Australia at an Olympic Games. Two years later, Cathy won gold in both the 200m and 400m at the Commonwealth Games in Victoria, Canada. At the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996, she won silver with a personal best time of 48.63s in the 400m. She was crowned World Champion in the same event at the World Athletic Championships the following year, was awarded Australian of the Year in 1998, and was again World Champion in the 400m in 1999.

Cathy's most notable achievement, however, came in 2000 at the Olympic Games in Sydney. Her image was beamed into millions of homes around the world when she became the first competing athlete to be invited to light the Olympic flame at the opening ceremony. She then went on to win the gold medal in the 400m, realising a life-long dream.

Cathy also spent 15 years building the Cathy Freeman Foundation—which commenced in 2007—where the focus was on supporting Indigenous children experience their potential in school and beyond and to realise their dreams.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1990	Commonwealth Games, Auckland, New Zealand – Gold medal 4x100m Awarded Young Australian of the Year	2002	Commonwealth Games, Manchester, England – Gold medal 4x400m
1994	Commonwealth Games, Victoria, Canada – Gold medal 200m Commonwealth Games, Victoria, Canada – Gold medal 400m Commonwealth Games, Victoria, Canada – Silver medal 4x100m	2005	Inducted into The Sport Australia Hall of Fame
1995	World Championships, Gothenburg, Sweden – Bronze medal 4x400m	2007	Founded the Cathy Freeman Foundation (now known as Murrup)
1996	Olympic Games, Atlanta, USA – Silver medal 400m	2009	Inducted into the Queensland Sport Hall of Fame
1997	World Athletic Championships, Athens, Greece – Gold medal 400m	2011	Elevated to 'Legend of Australian Sport' in The Sport Australia Hall of Fame
1998	Awarded Australian of the Year	2015	Recipient of the IOC Women and Sport Award (Oceania)
1999	World Athletic Championships, Seville, Spain – Gold medal 400m	2016	Appointed as a Member of the IOC Sport and Active Society Commission
2000	Olympic Games, Sydney, Australia – Lit the Olympic flame Olympic Games, Sydney, Australia – Gold medal 400m	2018	Awarded the Australian Olympic Committee Order of Merit
2001	Awarded Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) Awarded the Olympic Order by Juan Antonio Samaranch Awarded Laureus Sportswoman of the Year Awarded Centenary Medal Recipient of the ESPY Arthur Ashe Courage Award Inducted into the Australian Institute of Sport Living Legends Hall of Fame Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women	2025	Inducted into the Accor Stadium Hall of Fame Appointed as a Board Member of Brisbane 2032 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group Appointed as a Board Member of Brisbane 2032 Australian Olympic Community Foundation Board
		2026	Awarded Companion of the Order of Australia (AC)



OPENING ADDRESS

Professor Wesley Enoch AM

Professor Wesley Enoch AM is the Deputy Vice Chancellor Indigenous Australians at QUT and a proud Quandamooka man with over 35 years of leadership across the arts, education and governance.

An internationally acclaimed playwright and director, he has held senior roles including Chair of Creative Australia and Artistic Director of Queensland Theatre Company and Sydney Festival.

At QUT, he leads strategic engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and partners, advancing Indigenous excellence and cultural integrity. His work continues to shape national conversations through the integration of Indigenous knowledges in creative industries, education and public life.



MODERATOR

Dr Amy McQuire

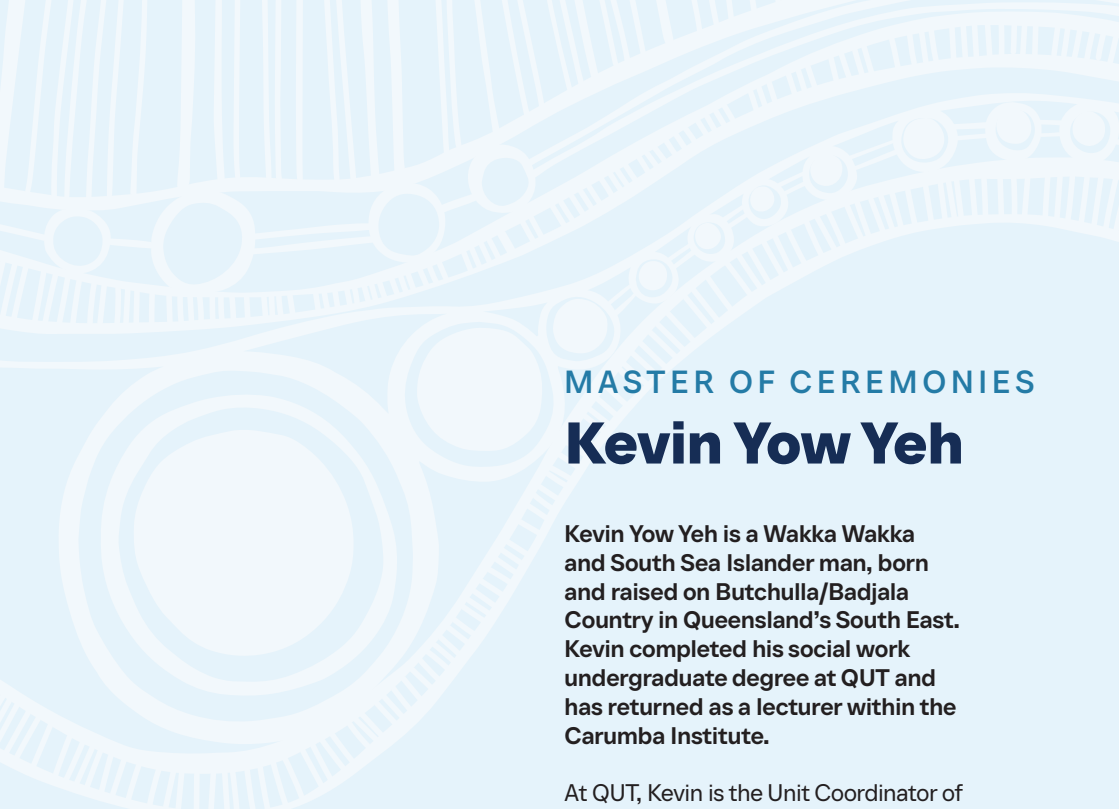
Dr Amy McQuire is a Darumbal and South Sea Islander woman from Rockhampton, Central Queensland. She is currently a Senior Lecturer at the Carumba Institute. She received her PhD from the University of Queensland.

Amy's research interest is in race and representation, focusing specifically on the crisis of disappeared Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, as well as the violence of the justice system. Her background is in journalism, where she has over two decades experience working in independent and Aboriginal media.

She has previously been the editor of two national Indigenous publications (National Indigenous Times and Tracker Magazine), and has been a correspondent for NITV National News, BuzzFeed News Australia and New Matilda. Her writing has been featured widely, and she has co-hosted the investigative podcast Curtain the Podcast for the past eight years.

In 2021 she published her first children's book *Day Break* and in 2024, published her first non-fiction work *Black Witness: the Power of Indigenous Media*. Amy is also a mother of two and enjoys reading in her downtime.





MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Kevin Yow Yeh

Kevin Yow Yeh is a Wakka Wakka and South Sea Islander man, born and raised on Butchulla/Badjala Country in Queensland's South East. Kevin completed his social work undergraduate degree at QUT and has returned as a lecturer within the Carumba Institute.

At QUT, Kevin is the Unit Coordinator of QUT002 Walking on Country and CIB103 Indigenous Resistance, Revolutionaries and Rights. As a Director of the Institute for Collaborative Race Research, Kevin is interested in race, racism and the pursuit of justice, and is an active member of the Magan-djin community where he enjoys collaborating with other First Nations peoples across academia, activism and the arts.

Kevin is a regular on ABC Brisbane Radio show and enjoys a laugh as a TV commentator on Network Ten's Gogglebox series.



WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Christopher McGregor

Christopher is a proud Mununjali and Yugara man who grew up in Woodridge and Caboolture and has always felt a strong sense of pride and connection to his family story, which he now strives to pass down to his son.

Chris captures and shares this connection through his art—he creates murals that depict his family strength and stories.

Chris works with Community around cultural education and also works in his family business, Wirrinyah Conservation Service. The goal is to revitalise the native ecosystems through cultural burning, revegetation, education and collaboration.

He has a Bachelor of Business and completed a Master of Management and Indigenous Leadership and is currently a PhD candidate at QUT. Chris' research is focused on nurturing the spirit of Indigenous men, looking at what the spiritual pillars are that ground Indigenous men in a society full of poisons and violence.

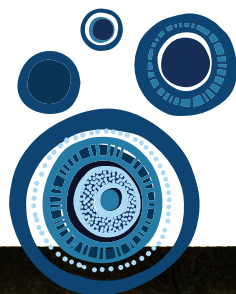


■ THERE'S ■ ■ PRIDE IN ■ ■ BLACK ■ KNOWING ■

About QUT Meanjin Oration

The QUT Meanjin Oration is the university's premier annual address showcasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander excellence, research and leadership.

Hosted by the Carumba Institute, the Oration creates a space for Indigenous led reflection, dialogue and storytelling for both community and the broader Australian public.





The Carumba Institute advances Black Knowing for real-world research impact, foregrounding Indigenous sovereignty and centring an Indigenous humanity.

**■ THERE'S ■
■ PRIDE IN ■
■ BLACK ■
■ KNOWING ■**

QUT Carumba Institute insists that Indigenous knowledges are living, embodied, excellent and essential to real world change.

**■ THERE'S ■
■ JOY IN ■
■ BLACK ■
■ KNOWING ■**

QUT Carumba Institute embraces the full range of emotions found in the expression of Black knowing, including the centrality of joy to Indigenous life worlds.

**■ THERE'S ■
■ BELONGING IN ■
■ BLACK ■
■ KNOWING ■**

QUT Carumba Institute extends the gift of belonging to the community, Indigenously and intellectually.

**■ THERE'S ■
■ POWER IN ■
■ BLACK ■
■ KNOWING ■**

QUT Carumba Institute recognises that Indigenous peoples and communities have long been powerful in their knowing – a knowing that is found in the hearts and homes of our people.

**■ THERE'S ■
■ JUSTICE IN ■
■ BLACK ■
■ KNOWING ■**

QUT Carumba Institute prioritises knowledge production, which is courageous in the pursuit of justice, grounded in truth-telling and of service to Indigenous and Black resistance struggles, locally and globally.

**■ THERE'S ■
■ POSSIBILITY IN ■
■ BLACK ■
■ KNOWING ■**

QUT Carumba Institute advances Black Knowing for real-world research impact, foregrounding Indigenous sovereignty, and centring an Indigenous humanity.

