



**Canadian Anthropology Society Letter of Concern
regarding UWA restructuring of Anthropology & Sociology**

Professor Amanda Davies, Head of School Social Sciences of University of Western Australia
Professor Amit Chakma, Vice Chancellor of The University of Western Australia
Professor Robert Shenton French, AC, Chancellor of The University of Western Australia
Winthrop Professor Raymond Da Silva Rosa, Chair of the Academic Board
Dr Nin Kirkham, Academic staff representative on the UWA Senate

July 26, 2021

Dear Professor Davies, Professor Chakma, Professor French, Professor Da Silva Rosa, and Dr Kirkham,

We, the undersigned members of the Executive Committee of the Canadian Anthropology Society (CASCA), are writing to express our deep concerns that, under the guise of budgetary constraints and institutional restructuring, the University of Western Australia has introduced a proposal that would eliminate altogether the Anthropology & Sociology group, terminate the Anthropology and Sociology Majors Programme, and lead to the firing of all permanent staff currently populating the discipline at UWA. Even more, the UWA's plan will lead to job losses across the School of Social Sciences, including a Professorial position in Archaeology, as well as the shift of Asian Studies and Media and Communication Studies to teaching focused disciplines.

By advancing this plan, UWA will profoundly limit its regional expertise not only as it concerns Australia, but also the Pacific and island Southeast Asia, and undercut Australian and international students' ability to pursue research and applied activities in these areas. In the doing, UWA will revoke its position as a global leader in social science scholarship on matters such as the environment, education, and nationalism, multiculturalism, and migration. Together, faculty engaged in each of these sub-disciplinary strands of study and activism have bravely forged empirically as well as politically and socially urgent research paths, and generated a critical precedent followed by anthropologists, sociologists, and other knowledge stakeholders and beneficiaries worldwide. Faculty members' research, publication, funding, and action-oriented achievements are many and have received wide acclaim.

By eliminating Anthropology and Sociology, the UWA will divest itself of work which is not only empirically but socially and politically compelling. For instance, UWA faculty have worked actively, to innumerable positive ends, with Aboriginal Australian communities seeking to gain native title, among other rights eroded or denied. Like our colleagues at the UWA, CASCA members are concerned to see far more, not less research and action in the areas of settler-colonialism and its destructive impacts on Indigenous identities and land rights, and the enduring and destructive imprint of colonialism on contemporary society as experienced by people of colour.

Even as the UWA argues its restructuring plan facilitates the expansion of its social science degrees' applied focus, its decision to terminate all anthropology and sociology faculty positions renders this very goal impossible. The UWA's plan will mean that its undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral fellows' scholarly and professional progress is halted,

potentially ending some's career trajectory, and ends the potential for future generations to be trained by faculty with the expertise needed to ensure graduates are effectively equipped not only to undertake rigorous and meaningful research, but also rank competitively for jobs within and beyond the university.

Today, the anthropological expertise is being sought around the world inside and outside academia, both in the private and public sectors. While business leaders, Governments and NGOs now value and understand the anthropological knowledge, UWA on its side go backwards towards the corporatisation of its corpus. These changes are motivated by economic restrictions and cutbacks in the short run, but the university will pay for its scientific reputation in the long run.

In the interests of preserving the UWA's reputation as a world leader in Anthropology and Sociology instruction, scholarship, and advocacy and activism, and in solidarity with your faculty, staff, and students, all of whom have done much to contribute to UWA's successes as a higher education institution, we strongly urge you to reconsider this proposal.

Sincerely,

Emma Varley on behalf of the CASCA Executive Committee

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