

Call for PhD Candidates

Projects in Coastal Wetland Restoration

Are you passionate about nature-based solutions and restoring ecosystems for a more climate-resilient future?

We are seeking highly motivated candidates interested in advancing research that supports the restoration, management, and protection of coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, saltmarshes, seagrasses, and kelp. These ecosystems play a critical role in biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation (blue carbon), coastal protection, and supporting fisheries and communities. As a PhD candidate, you will contribute to projects that aim to develop and apply innovative methods for mapping, evaluating, and scaling up coastal wetland restoration in Australia and globally.

Research topics

This is a general call for PhD candidates interested in working in the coastal wetland restoration space. Projects may explore a range of topics such as those outlined below, but we also welcome related research ideas aligned with this broader theme.

Economics & Natural Capital

- Measuring and valuing the ecological and economic benefits of restoration projects
- Assessing economic feasibility of restoration; the costs and benefits (e.g., biodiversity, tourism, fisheries), to support investment and smart decision-making,
- Collecting and collating data to support the development of nature-based markets (e.g., water quality, biodiversity credits).

Ecology

- Developing novel interventions to improve revegetation success, including approaches that enhance plant establishment, survival and growth,
- Investigating coastal wetland plant and soil biology and ecology in response to habitat degradation and restoration,
- Developing robust indicators for ecosystem health and condition, including plant, soil and animal responses.

Modelling & Mapping

- Investigating how spatial decision-support tools, multi-criteria analysis, and stakeholder engagement can guide prioritisation of restoration or protection actions in coastal wetlands,
- Identifying threats and drivers of degradation across coastal wetlands and assessing how ecosystem condition and service provision may change under future scenarios,
- Designing and applying models or frameworks that integrate ecological, climatic, and socioeconomic data to plan and predict outcomes of restoration activities.

Social Science

- Applying qualitative and/or mixed methods to identify and assess the social and cultural benefits derived from healthy coastal wetlands
- Investigating how different models of education, engagement and science communication influence ecological outcomes, community awareness, and long-term stewardship
- Investigating the social, cultural, and economic factors that influence landholder participation in wetland restoration initiatives.

RMIT's Centre for Nature Positive Solutions

RMIT's Centre for Nature Positive Solutions (CNPS) is a multi-disciplinary team with a proven track record of conducting impactful research that addresses the world's most pressing environmental challenges, including climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Grounded in cutting-edge science, CNPS focuses on innovative research that transforms the conservation, restoration, and management of ecosystems, ensuring a sustainable future where both people and nature can thrive. CNPS develops solutions that mitigate climate change, protect aquatic biodiversity, foster economic growth, and promote capacity building and community wellbeing.

With a dynamic team of 18 researchers at RMIT University, we collaborate globally to provide actionable guidance and solutions that empower communities, industries, and governments. Our core team has over 50 years of collective research experience, with expertise in ecology, biogeochemistry, microbiology, environmental economics, remote sensing, social science, mapping, and modelling. CNPS includes internationally recognised researchers with more than 300 peer-reviewed publications.

Potential Supervisors

Dr Stacey Trevathan-Tackett is a Senior Lecturer at RMIT who specialises in coastal wetland soil processes and function, including biogeochemistry and microbial ecology. Her multidisciplinary research team integrates fundamental and applied research approaches to wetland preservation and restoration.

Dr Paul Carnell is a Senior Lecturer at RMIT, whose research focuses on measuring the many values of ecosystems. This includes developing novel methods to measure ecosystem change, value their services and applying these in the real-world through on-ground restoration projects or assessing opportunities for improved management and restoration.

Dr Micheli Costa is a Senior Research Fellow at RMIT, who focuses on marine quantitative ecology and coastal conservation and restoration, making significant contributions to the research fields of spatial modelling, decision science and coastal wetlands. Her research aims to understand how blue carbon varies at different spatial scales, how management actions influence the ecosystem services provided by coastal wetlands, and how future environmental conditions may shape wetland distribution and the strategies needed to protect and restore these ecosystems.

Dr Melissa Wartman is a Senior Research Fellow at RMIT, where she leads interdisciplinary research advancing nature-based climate solutions for people and nature. Her work focuses on restoring coastal wetland ecosystems by developing and applying innovative techniques that enhance biodiversity, strengthen ecosystem services, and improve resilience to climate change. Through robust outcome monitoring, her research helps assess restoration effectiveness and generate evidence to guide future management, policy and investment.

Dr Maria Palacios is a Senior Research Fellow and Science Communicator at RMIT, whose expertise lies in driving nature-based solutions research (e.g. coastal wetland restoration) that engages industry stakeholders and empowers local communities. Her research explores how to enhance knowledge, shift perceptions, and influence behaviours that support environmental stewardship and effective ecosystem management.

Location

RMIT University is based in Melbourne, Australia, with campuses located both in the City or Bundoora.

Competitive RMIT Scholarships

Scholarship Information

Scholarships are required to complete a PhD in Australia. **Competitive RMIT Scholarship** rounds open in June (annually) for domestic and international applicants. Successful candidates may receive a stipend (approx. AUD \$36,245 per year) and tuition fee support for up to 3.5 years, subject to eligibility.

Candidate Skillset

We encourage applications from individuals with strong communication skills, demonstrated capacity for independent research, and a genuine interest in making a real-world impact through applied research.

A strong CV for this competitive scholarship scheme may include:

- A Master's or Honours degree in a similar field.
- First-authored publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.
- Good communication skills.
- Demonstrated ability to work independently.

How to apply?

Interested applicants are invited to email Dr Micheli Costa (micheli.costa@rmit.edu.au), if they meet the following [PhD eligibility criteria](#).

Please include:

- A short cover letter (max 1-page) outlining your research interests and experience
- A brief CV (2-pages)
- Academic transcript(s)
- Contact details for two academic referees

Please contact Dr Micheli Costa (micheli.costa@rmit.edu.au) for any enquiries.

Application Deadline

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until **31 July 2026 for International Students** and **31 August 2026 for Domestic Students**.

International Students	Domestic Students
EOI Deadline: August 30, 2026 Full Application: September 30, 2026	EOI Deadline: September 30, 2026 Full Application: October 30, 2026