



Sam Redding (second from left) with a group of students from Nepean Creative and Performing Arts High School.

Sam's head start on the path

A WESTERN Sydney University mentoring and cultural engagement program is helping to close the gap on educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. High school students from across western and south-western Sydney join the university's Pathways to Dreaming program in year 8, and take part in on-campus workshops, Aboriginal cultural excursions and in-school mentoring right through to year 12. Aboriginal Elders and educators are closely involved and are strong supporters of the program. Each year, the students in the program design and implement a group project linked to aspects of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life. In 2018, university offers were made to at least 41 participants of the program – with 90% of these offers for Western Sydney University. This figure indicates that more than 50% of the year 12 cohort for 2017 has successfully accessed higher education. With more than 500 students from 32 Greater Western Sydney schools participating in 2018, the rate of success for the program is expected to exponentially increase. Sam Redding, a second year Bachelor of Physiotherapy student

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at Western, participated in Pathways to Dreaming during her years at Nepean Creative and Performing Arts High School. Sam says Pathways gave her a head-start at University, and also helped her to feel a stronger connection with her culture and heritage. “I only became aware of my heritage when I was eight years

old, when my great aunt began to research the family line on my mother's side. Through Pathways, I was able to learn more about my culture and develop an understanding of where I come from,” said Sam. “I always knew that I wanted to go to university, but Pathways helped me to become familiar with uni life – so I knew I was making the right choice before I even started my degree. Like many former Pathways participants, who are now students at Western, Sam has rejoined Pathways as a mentor. She said

she enjoys the opportunity to visit her old high school, and help other students on the same path to success. Pathways to Dreaming has been working since 2009 to build and support students' educational and career aspirations; increase their skills and confidence; enhance their Aboriginal cultural knowledge and networks; and broaden their horizons. At least 12 former Pathways students have already graduated from university, completing degrees in fields such as health science, teaching, photography, social science, community and social development, nursing and paramedicine.



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As a prospective student you are not required to have completed the HSC or any qualifications to apply to study at Western via the program.

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