



Jessica will be part of the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers.

Jess finds work study balance

WESTERN Sydney University recognises the importance of having more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in the classroom.

The university offers a Bachelor of Education (Primary) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education program, with a ‘Block Mode’ structure that allows students to balance work and study, while maintaining strong connections with their communities.

Jessica Wellington is a Wiradjuri woman, and is in her fourth and final year of the program.

Jess shares with the *Koori Mail* her experience of studying at Western – a uni that has more than 700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in 2018; is ranked in the top 2% in the world; and has the highest rating for employer satisfaction of all the Sydney universities.

Q: Why do you want to be a teacher?

A: Growing up, I was one of eight kids and my family moved around a lot.

I went to six different high schools, and didn’t have an Aboriginal mentor at any of them. I first enrolled at Western in a Bachelor of Health Science and I had the opportunity to work with some of the university’s schools engagement programs. It was only then that I realised that school-based programs that help Aboriginal kids actually exist – and I realised that was where my true passion lay.

Q: Have you enjoyed studying at Western?

A: Yes. I was the first person in my family to study at university, so I didn’t know what I was getting myself into. But uni turned out to be such a friendly and supportive environment – it’s like a big family. I have studied at both the Campbelltown and Bankstown campuses, and they are so convenient to get to. I will soon be graduating with two degrees, but I already have plans to come back and study my Masters!

Q: Are you prepared for life outside of university?

Yes, definitely. Uni gives you really adaptable skills, and the Block Mode has allowed me to get a lot of work

experience while I study. Right now I am doing a 30 day prac at a South-West Sydney school. My supervising teacher is Aboriginal and I have been able to run some fantastic cultural programs. I plan to get a few years of experience under my belt, and then I hope to work in a remote Aboriginal community in rural NSW or the NT.

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Q: How did you get into university?

A: I applied straight out of high school and got in with my ATAR. I did worry that my ATAR wouldn’t be enough, so I also applied via the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alternative Entry Program. Having a back-up option really took the stress out of the HSC.



WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY



READY WHEN YOU ARE.

Mid-Year Entry Information Day.
Saturday 19 May. Parramatta City campus.

westernsydney.edu.au/midyear

