

# Visits help 'open eyes'

**I**NDIGENOUS students from rural NSW have started at Western Sydney University after a weeklong visit to the university during high school helped open their eyes to higher education.

Hailing from regions as diverse as the NSW north-west and Hunter Valley, the students first experienced life at the university through the Rural Indigenous Student Visits program.

The program aims to engage students in life on campus and encourages them to chase their dreams, as well as helping them make informed decisions about their future careers.

"Exposing high school students to the university experience allows them to become accustomed to tertiary education, and provides them with a sense of belonging," program manager Jo Galea says.

"It's important in diminishing the fear of the unknown for prospective students, who regularly express their desires for a university education after attending the program."

"It's also crucial in closing the gap for Indigenous students, especially from rural and regional parts of the state."

Program activities include fun and educational workshops, tours of university facilities, career planning and university information seminars, as well as social



**Ready for study: Western Sydney University students from NSW centres: from left, Olivia, from Warren, Katrina (Brewarrina), Matt (Wellington), Charlie (Cessnock) and Kobi (Singleton).**

get-togethers with local Aboriginal Elders and community members.

The high school students are also joined by current students, who answer questions and provide an insight into their own experiences on campus.

"Cultural activities are an

important element of the program and have a powerful influence on students' self-awareness, identity and motivation," Ms Galea says.

Katrina, from Brewarrina in north-western NSW, is part of the latest group of students who have made the transition to the

university this year. "I always wanted to do nursing, and attending the program showed me I could. Now I am here living on campus and studying what I am passionate about," she said.

Merinda, from Muswellbrook, says she never thought she would

be able to attend university due to her lack of commitment at school.

"Attending the rural visits with Western Sydney University showed me that there are numerous ways to enter university, and now I am studying a Bachelor of Policing at Western," she said.



**WESTERN SYDNEY  
UNIVERSITY**



## DETERMINED TO SUCCEED.

We believe in a future that is unlimited for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities.

If you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander you can apply directly to study at Western Sydney University through our Alternative Entry Assessment Program.

Western offers two specifically designed courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to study by block:

- Bachelor of Education (Primary)
- Bachelor of Community and Social Development

**Applications are now open.**

**Assessments will be held on Monday 5 and Tuesday 6 June 2017.**

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