



# Central Coast twins tackle university to support local Mob



Wiradjuri and Gomeroi twins, Leigham and Bailey Carney.



Wiradjuri and Gomeroi twins, Leigham and Bailey Carney, proudly call Darkinjung Country on the NSW Central Coast home. At 23, the brothers are deeply embedded in their community – through work, sport, and cultural sharing – but felt a strong desire to do more. Both work at Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Services, supporting the health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the Central Coast. It was through this work that their passion to give back grew stronger. “Working in this space lit a fire in me,” Bailey said.

“I wanted to look into further training so I could help our mob struggling with mental health and addiction.”

Bailey’s journey began with a personal search for identity but quickly evolved into a mission to improve his community. Although he didn’t achieve the ATAR he’d hoped at school, he reached out to the University of Newcastle’s Wollotuka Institute and was guided into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Admission Scheme – a pathway designed to support Indigenous students into higher education.

This scheme allows applicants to gain entry through an interview process, taking life experience into account when assessing ATAR or equivalent rank. Bailey, already holding a Certificate IV in Community Services, successfully interviewed and was offered a place in the Bachelor of Psychological Science.

*“I was just happy to finish high school, so I was stoked Wollotuka could help me get into university. I have seen the impact of intergenerational trauma, addiction and mental health – I just want to make a difference, and I feel like it’s my responsibility to give back to the community of Darkinjung,”* Bailey added.

Inspired by his younger brother’s determination, Leigham decided to pursue his own path into higher education: “If he can do it, I can too!”

After working full-time in community health and considering nursing, Leigham eventually found his calling in social work.

“Originally I was drawn to nursing because of the clinical work I was doing working alongside nurses and GPs – but I realised I wouldn’t be able to handle the needles and blood,” he laughed.

“I didn’t know much about social work at first, but after talking with Mum and learning more, I realised I was already doing similar work.

“It just clicked – social work still lets me work one-on-one with people and encourage them to access our health services,” Leigham said.

Bailey began his studies in 2023. When Leigham followed in 2025, his brother was there to help him prepare for study.

Although the Carney twins have one another’s support, they both credit the Wollotuka Institute for its role providing academic, cultural and emotional guidance throughout their university experience.

“The team at Wollotuka are second to none! You can come in and talk about anything – not just study,” Bailey said.

“There’s the cultural support and staff who understand what it’s like to be a Blackfella going through uni.”

More than that, studying at the University of Newcastle and being involved with Wollotuka has created new connections and taken the young men to parts of the country they have never seen before.

Earlier this year, the Carney twins found themselves in Perth competing as part of the Wollotuka team who were ultimately named the 2025 Indigenous Nationals champions – an experience which has become a key highlight of their university journey.

Their message to young mob is clear: take every opportunity.

“We didn’t know what we wanted to do at first. There’s pressure to decide quickly, but you’ve got time, let it happen naturally,” Leigham said.

“One of the best pieces of advice we got was to grab every opportunity, big or small, with both hands.”

Bailey reiterated his brother’s words and said it’s good to find a routine to balance it all – study, work and sport.

“Find a routine and stick to the structure,” Bailey added.

“When the balance is right and the routine is set, life flows. It’s not always easy – injuries or tough days at work can throw things off – but sticking to a routine makes a big difference.

“It works even better too knowing we have study options here on the Central Coast and we don’t have to travel into the city.”

With the recent announcement of the new Central Coast campus and course relocations to Gosford, the twins will be able to stay living, working and studying within their community. Leigham will relocate to the new campus to complete his studies, while Bailey will head to the clinical campus based on the grounds of Gosford hospital.

Wollotuka’s Student Recruitment Coordinator, Kristy Faulkner, said the team was thrilled to have played a role in Leigham and Bailey’s journey to university.

“You don’t have to be a fresh-faced year 12 school-leaver with a high ATAR. We can help you succeed in a culturally safe environment,” Kristy said.

“The twins reached out to us years after they finished school looking to further their education and support their community – and we found the best way for them to achieve it.

“Whether you have an ambition to become a doctor, nurse, engineer, teacher, physiotherapist, psychiatrist, artist or scientist – we can help you find the right degree, and a pathway to get there.”

While Bailey scored his place at the University of Newcastle through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Admission Scheme, there are other free pathway programs available to help more of our community access higher education.

“We’re here to support, so don’t be shame. Reach out to us and have a yarn on what you’d like to achieve,” Kristy added.

The Wollotuka Institute recently won the Australian Financial Review Higher Education Award for Equity and Access for their ongoing commitment to provide high quality support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**For more than forty years, Wollotuka has been the home away from home for their students.**

Chat to the team at the Wollotuka Institute by calling 02 4921 6863 or email [Wollotuka-recruitment@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Wollotuka-recruitment@newcastle.edu.au)

Find out what’s available online at [newcastle.edu.au/study/undergraduate/admissions-and-entry/entry-options](http://newcastle.edu.au/study/undergraduate/admissions-and-entry/entry-options)