

higher education 2026

YOUR GUIDE TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HIGHER EDUCATION

Turning compassion into a career



FOR Tamara Solien, a proud Torres Strait Islander woman with connections to Badu Island, returning to study after 11 years as a stay-at-home mum was a leap of faith.

"The idea of returning to study and work was so scary after being out of the workforce for so long, so I wanted to make sure I was pursuing something I was passionate about," she said.

"If I was going to be stepping back from being a fulltime mum, it needed to be worth it."

After witnessing her brothers struggle with their own mental-health, the 37-year-old wanted to learn more so she could gain insights into what her brothers were going through. So when she saw the opportunity to study the Certificate IV in Mental-Health (CHC43315) through TAFE Queensland, she knew it was time to invest in herself, and her future.

Tamara studied online and was able to access Fee-Free TAFE funding to help cover the cost of her course. The flexibility

of online learning made it possible to balance study with parenting and everyday life.

"The online space was great and enabled me to have my youngest with me while I studied," she said.

"While it was hard work, I could catch up on classes and do it at my own pace, which was perfect. I would even play my class recordings and listen to them while I was in the car driving."

Tamara credits her teachers for helping her stay on track and importantly, building her confidence.

"The teachers were amazing. If I didn't understand something or needed that extra guidance, they were always so supportive and helpful," she said.

After years away from formal education, Tamara had doubts about her ability to succeed. But with encouragement from her teachers and support from her family, she found her voice and her strength.

"Being a mum myself and going back to study, I lacked confidence in myself and worried I wasn't smart enough,"

she said.

"I wanted to support other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers who felt the same."

Tamara's placement at Staying Deadly Hub, a First Nations mental health service, led to a job offer before she even graduated. Now working as a mental health wellbeing support worker, she helps clients feel safe and supported during appointments with psychologists, psychiatrists, and care teams.

"I'm like the in-between bridge so our clients aren't so overwhelmed when they come in seeking support," she said.

"Seeing someone leave a session in a lighter mood and better headspace, and knowing that I helped, is just so rewarding."

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TAFE Queensland student Tamara Solien is turning her compassion for others into a rewarding career.

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‘Brothers’ finding their voice at AFTRS

When Leroy Creed-Jones stepped onto the AFTRS campus in Sydney in February this year, he wasn’t just starting a new course – he was stepping into a new chapter of his life. After nearly a decade away from work and study, the Pitta Pitta, Kalkadoon, Gungarri and Quandamooka man from Brisbane found himself surrounded by community, opportunity and optimism for the future.

“I’d become pretty much a homebody, and I knew I wasn’t going to get anywhere staying in Brisbane,” Leroy said. “With a passion for radio I saw this as a big opportunity for me to make something of myself.”

Encouraged by his brother Kerrod Meredith-Creed – an AFTRS graduate who now works in the School’s First Nations team – Leroy successfully applied for the Graduate Diploma in Radio and Podcasting (GDRP), thinking he might do it part-time and even online. But at First Nations Orientation Week (held the week before whole-of-School Orientation) he felt so at home he decided to stay. And a big part of that feeling came from meeting “brother” Micah Kickett, a Wilyakali man from Broken Hill, who opted for part-time remote study while working in Canberra.

“I saw this as a big opportunity for me to make something of myself.”

While their journeys are different, their connection was instant and their bond with each other – and subsequently with fellow students and lecturers – has helped them to thrive throughout the course.

“Because I’ve got a full-time job and other things that I do ... sometimes it feels like it gets a bit too much,” Micah said. “But then when I speak to Leroy, it kind of gives me that sense of hope to be like, ‘Nah, if brother can do it, I can do it too.’

“Even though I’m an online student and Leroy is on campus, it really helps just knowing that I’ve got him there. We chat constantly and keep each other informed, and if I’m struggling I’ll just call him.”

After studying media and law at university, Micah spent eight years practicing as a lawyer. But the “burning desire” for a more creative path was always in the back of his mind. In 2019, he gave stand-up comedy a go – a bold step towards something different – but it still didn’t quite scratch the itch. One day while driving to work a strong feeling of “uncertainty” came over him that led to a sequence of events that would change his life’s course.

“I didn’t go into work that day,” Micah recalled. “I took a left turn, then a right turn, and I rolled into the ABC. I’m like, ‘Hey I’m Micah Kickett, is there any way I could get some experience?’ They gave me a microphone and said, ‘Here you go, get some interviews’.”

Micah got back in the car and immediately heard a radio announcement calling for trainee radio broadcasters at a community station. So he went straight there, signed up for the training and 10 weeks later was a lawyer by day and community radio volunteer broadcaster by night. This, along with his freelance ABC interviews, led to his current job as the CBAA First Nations Affairs Reporter at Parliament House.

Micah then met Kerrod and GDRP Course Convenor Natalie Pozdeev at a CBAA conference and realised AFTRS would be the perfect career complement to “learn about podcasting and sharpen my skills”.

Leroy, who had previously studied screen media at the Bachelor Institute, said the GDRP also sparked a deeper curiosity in podcasting for him, and broadened his understanding of the wider world of audio storytelling and career possibilities.

“When I first came to AFTRS I was just thinking about radio, I wasn’t thinking about all the other stuff, like podcasting and voiceover,” he said. “It made me realise how big radio is and all the other opportunities out there.”

Leroy said along with key skills, the course had taught him a lot about the audio industry, the importance of audience and how to work collaboratively to produce engaging content. One highlight was working on Show Radio, at Sydney’s Royal Easter Show, where he got hands-on experience across a range of roles – from presenting to panelling and producing. He said it also helped him connect more deeply with his peers. By dropping his guard and letting his personality shine through, Leroy discovered the power of bringing his authentic self to his work.

“At first, I wasn’t really being myself, I’ll be honest about that,” he said. “But as I started being [at AFTRS] longer, getting along with the other classmates, I started actually being myself and opening up a bit more,” he said. “At Show Radio they absolutely loved some of the things that I come out of my mouth ... I was cracking them up, even though I wasn’t trying to be intentionally funny; I was just being myself.”

Natalie Pozdeev said it was always rewarding to see that kind of growth. She emphasised the space in the industry for everyone – and that leaning into your personality is not just accepted, but encouraged.

“What we find is the radio industry wants you to be the best version of you, so your most authentic self, and to show up exactly as that,” she said. “That’s what we find works really well.”

Micah said while he also thought Show Radio was a highlight, what he loved



Leroy Creed-Jones (L) and Micah Kickett at AFTRS.

most about the course went deeper than the exercises. “All the tasks and the assessments are quite enjoyable, and just learning how to produce stories and do radio announcements are great skills to have, but in all honesty, it’s also just the overall AFTRS experience,” he said.

“...you feel very supported from that cultural sense as well.”

“The lecturers have been very compassionate and very understanding because I know that both Leroy and I have had issues where we’ve had to request extensions and they genuinely understand – like they understand things about the importance of family and sorry business and you feel very supported from that cultural sense as well.

“And I also feel really supported by the non-indigenous students. I’ve seen how,

on campus, they’ve really taken Leroy in and how supportive they are. It’s just cool to see.”

With Leroy planning to graduate at the end of this year and Micah hopefully the year after, the pair say they are now brothers for life.

“Leroy inspires me so much,” Micah said. “He’s relocated from his family, left his comfort zone, and is creating something for himself. It really helps to keep me going.”

And this inspiration goes well beyond the AFTRS community, according to brother Kerrod.

“Leroy has 11 nieces and nephews and when he goes home to Brisbane they’re all asking, ‘Uncle Leroy, what are you doing? What are you doing?’ And they’re showing genuine interest in the radio course,” Kerrod said. “I think it’s really cool. He’s inspiring the next generation of our family to follow their dreams and chase what they want to do.”

Micah echoed that sentiment. “We’re not just learning for ourselves. We’re showing our communities what’s possible. We’re proving that our voices matter.”

Applications are now open for the Graduate Diploma in Radio and Podcasting 2026 Intake, and close 4 November.

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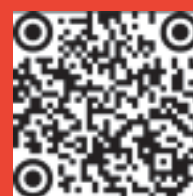
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Lisa Roe is studying her Bachelor of Early Childhood Education through Swinburne Online, supported by the Moondani Toombadool Centre.

The journey from the cattle station to the classroom



LISA Roe grew up in Geraldton, living and working on a cattle station. For a long time, she assumed this was where her future lay. But deep down, she knew it wasn't what she really wanted.

"Living and working on cattle stations, I met so many people from all over the world and all walks of life," Lisa said. "I started reflecting on my life and what the future was for me."

Lisa had a growing sense that there was more out there for her, so she made a brave decision. She left Geraldton and moved to Derby, away from family and everything she knew, to forge her own path.

Lisa immediately felt at home in Derby. She found work at the local Derby District High School as an education assistant and quickly discovered just how much she loved being in a learning environment. She watched the way her colleagues taught and began to notice how each student responded in the classroom. She was interested in the children's behaviour and the different ways they engaged with learning.

"I am like a sponge that soaks everything up and still wants to gain more," Lisa said. "I just want to fill my curious mind."

While raising her own children

and working at the school, Lisa enrolled in an education support course through TAFE, attending classes in the evening. But, she still wanted to learn more. When she came across an ad for online study, she decided to give it a go. She rang the number and enrolled in Swinburne's Bachelor of Early Childhood Education.

At first, it felt like a leap into the deep end.

"Earlier in my studies, I tried to balance it all on my own, and I was falling into a place where I was finding it hard to take control of my journey," Lisa said.

She was juggling work, study, and caring for her family, all while trying to navigate university systems on her own. Online learning gave her flexibility, but it was also isolating at times. Lisa felt lost and like she was "swimming through muddy water".

Things started to change when Lisa discovered the Moondani Toombadool Centre, Swinburne's dedicated support service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. That first phone call changed everything.

"Once I found out there was an Indigenous support centre and I reached out, that was the real

start of my journey and achievements," Lisa said.

Established in 2018, the Moondani Toombadool Centre is responsible for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters at Swinburne, including Indigenous student support and success services, teaching and learning, research, staff, culture, engagement and governance.

The Moondani Toombadool Centre prides itself on helping to create real connections and strong relationships with mob studying at Swinburne. The team gave Lisa practical support, helping with enrolment, assignments, deadlines and communication with the university. Just as importantly, the team provided Lisa with connection, community and encouragement throughout her studies.

"The Moondani Toombadool Centre gave me the direction to believe in myself, and anything is possible if you believe in yourself," Lisa said.

As Lisa progressed through the course, she found herself learning more than just the curriculum. The early childhood education course explores innovative teaching methods and introduces students to unique units on nature play, social justice, sustainability and Indigenous knowledges. Lisa found herself deeply engaged with the content and even more

determined to put her learning into practice.

Lisa's confidence began to grow. She remembers one subject where she had to film herself speaking on camera about the importance of reading in early childhood.

"I was terrified about my appearance and if I was talking properly, if my English was good," she remembers.

But she did the assignment and slowly, those little moments of doubt gave way to small wins, another passed subject, a kind word from a tutor, a goal achieved. Each one added to her confidence.

The flexible learning environment gave her space to study on her own terms. The course structure, designed for people working or with family responsibilities, meant she could balance study around the realities of life in a remote town.

With the support of the Moondani Toombadool Centre and her colleagues, Lisa kept going. She found that "those muddy waters became clear".

Today, Lisa is still working at the Derby District High School. Watching the children she supports greet her with easy smiles and cheeky banter, it is clear she is deeply respected and valued in her role.

She's now in the final stages of

her degree, with her sights set on becoming a teacher. Her goal is to keep working with young people in her community and help guide them in their own learning journeys.

Looking back, she says she feels very different to the person who first signed up.

"Looking at where I was and where I am now is incredible. I have grown so much. Anything is possible," Lisa said.

When asked what advice she has for someone interested in studying at Swinburne her answer was simple.

"Do it," she encouraged. "It is worth the laughter, the tears and the achievement."

Whether you're studying online or on campus, the Moondani Toombadool Centre is here to support you. Contact indigenoustudents@swinburne.edu.au for a friendly yarn about how the Moondani Toombadool Centre team can help you to achieve your study and career goals.



Moondani Toombadool Centre

Moondani Toombadool Centre offers you ongoing support from course selection right through to graduation.

Indigenous Academic Support Program (IASP)

Receive personalised academic tutoring to navigate your coursework successfully.

Cultural support and opportunities

Embrace and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through key Indigenous events, workshops, and opportunities.

Networking opportunities

Connect with peers and form friendships through MTC's Indigenous Student Lounge and Indigenous Learning Circles.

Enrolment assistance

Access enrolment support from our Indigenous Student Services team to ensure a smooth process.

Indigenous Student Charter

Understand how Swinburne is leading Indigenous student empowerment and excellence where you are valued, respected and heard. These principles and actions can be explored in Swinburne's Indigenous Student Charter.

Moondani Vocational Centre of Excellence (MVCE)

Develop skills and experience across growing industries like the care economy, renewable energy and construction.

And as Swinburne is a dual-sector university, we have courses ranging from certificate level to PhD – so we can provide pathway options into any area of study that may interest you.

To connect and yarn/chat about your needs, please contact the Moondani Toombadool Centre:





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

Find out what’s available online at newcastle.edu.au/study/undergraduate/admissions-and-entry/entry-options

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If you're thinking about studying or just want to know what we have to offer, get in touch.

newcastle.edu.au/wollotuka

Leightham
Bachelor of Social Work (Honours)

Bailey
Bachelor of Psychological Science



Kenyah explored different areas to find out more about her own skill set and ensure her study path aligned with her professional and personal values.

Kenyah explored different areas to find out more about her own skill set and ensure her study path aligned with her professional and personal values

Forging a new path

For Kenyah Hura, finding the right professional path took time. The twenty-eight-year-old fourth-year Bachelor of Youth Work student said good advice from her Dad helped shape her career path.

"He told me to stay curious and keep busy. I always made sure I was doing something, whether it was studying Law at TAFE, or Psychology which I studied for a year when I was living in Perth."

Kenyah explored different areas to find out more about her own skill set and ensure her study path aligned with her professional and personal values. "About three years ago I sat myself down and wrote out a plan to help discover what I wanted to dedicate myself to. For me it came down to a desire to advocate for young people and make a positive impact on the world."

A phone conversation with a Victoria University (VU) course adviser outlined a possibility she'd never considered.

Studying Youth Work at VU has honestly been the best decision I've ever made. I absolutely love the course.

In 2023, Kenyah was awarded a New Colombo Scholarship to travel to the coastal city of Visakhapatnam, India. For two weeks she worked with staff at the Catherine Public School, supporting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

"I taught a course on mindfulness and well-being to about 40 girls aged between 12 to 15 years old. It was an amazing experience. It was a fantastic opportunity to put my youth work into practice, to make mistakes in a supportive environment, collaborate with other students and make great friends."

Kenyah accessed the VU First Nations Fund to help with airfares and study support. Without the generosity of the VU First Nations Fund, she wouldn't have been able to take up the opportunity and have such an invaluable experience.

The VU First Nations Fund was created in 2022 and has provided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with

opportunities to study at VU across various levels. The Fund has been instrumental in supporting students to access enriching experiences related to their studies, including attending conferences, sporting competitions and assisting with research costs. The generosity extended by donors is life-changing and provides support for students working towards achieving their professional goals.

Along with her busy study schedule, Kenyah has also taken part in several internships at Oxfam, arranged by CareerTrackers' Indigenous Internship Program. "I did my first one in 2023 working in the Program Quality and Development team."

One of Kenyah's professional and personal goals is to create positive change, especially for First Nations peoples. Her Youth Work studies have led to an interest in working towards changing policies around the incarceration of First Nations youth, particularly the incarceration age of children.

Kenyah's grandmother is part of The Stolen Generation - she was forcibly removed from her family as a young child and taken to Tasmania. "We didn't know about our heritage on my Mum's side until my

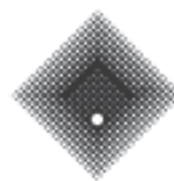
grandmother, who has now passed, started to share her story with us. My Dad is Māori, so that is the heritage we embraced growing up. Our family are still trying to find out where my grandmother came from."

VU's Indigenous Academic Unit, Moondani Balluk, situated on the lands of the Wurundjeri, Woiwurrung and Bunurong people of the Kulin nation, has also supported Kenyah and her many achievements. "It's great to drop by Moondani Balluk to meet new people and learn about where they come from. I don't have a lot of history about my own family, so I've really enjoyed learning about other people's history. My identity has been lost but I'm proud of where we come from and hopefully one day, I'll be able to put a name to it."

Later this year, Kenyah will be a qualified Youth Worker,

seeking new opportunities to share her skills. "I'm so excited to get out there and explore how the ways Youth Work can help different sectors. I've had such positive experience at VU but I'm also looking forward to whatever happens next."

'Studying Youth Work at VU has honestly been the best decision I've ever made. I absolutely love the course'.



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Join us at one of our 2025 VU Open Day events to meet our team:

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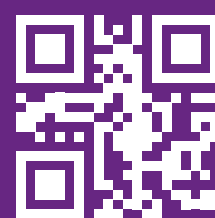
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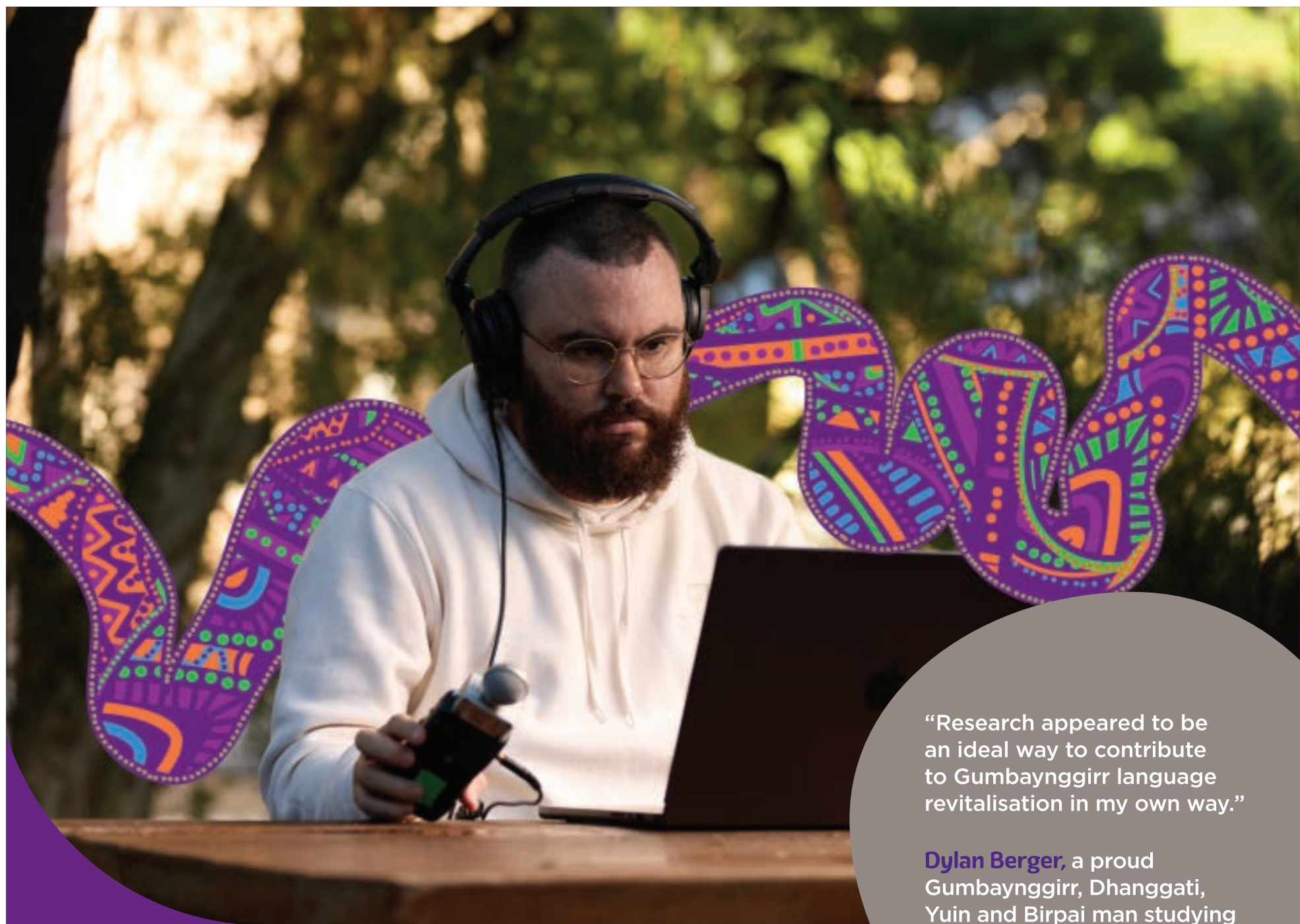
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“I never thought a young girl like me from Moggill would make it [to university]. So, for me, it wasn't just an offer to study – it made me feel like I was capable of anything.”

Tachae Douglas-Miller,
a proud Ngunnawal woman
studying a Bachelor of Dental
Science (Honours) at UQ.



“Research appeared to be an ideal way to contribute to Gumbaynggirr language revitalisation in my own way.”

Dylan Berger, a proud Gumbaynggirr, Dhanggati, Yuin and Birpai man studying a Doctor of Philosophy at UQ.

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Tachae Douglas-Miller, a proud Ngunnawal woman, is studying a Bachelor of Dental Science (Honours) at The University of Queensland. Tachae is pictured here enjoying a study break on campus.

Turning her curiosity into a healthcare career

As a teenager, Tachae Douglas-Miller felt like an imposter applying for a role as a dental assistant.

When she put The University of Queensland as her first QTAC preference, she didn't dare to dream that she might actually get accepted into a uni she saw as 'too prestigious' for her.

Discovering her passion

Tachae has found teeth fascinating for as long as she can remember.

"I'm naturally quite curious – I was always a bit of a weird kid interested in weird things," she says.

It wasn't until an appointment with a friendly First Nations dentist that Tachae realised this curiosity of hers could become her career. The chance encounter pushed her to apply to work part time as a dental assistant, as well as inspiring her to start creating quirky necklaces out of teeth.

The second major milestone in Tachae's journey to dentistry was applying to UQ, a brave move for someone who wasn't expected to continue onto university in the first place.

"I was told that I wasn't smart enough or black enough to get into university," she says.

"I always felt like I was underestimated, like people just thought I was the girl who makes silly jewellery. But this started a fire in me – I used that hate and suppression to fuel my drive to succeed."

And Tachae's successes are already starting to add up, beginning with

the letter of acceptance to study her undergraduate degree at UQ.

When the email came, it was unexpected and highly emotional.

"I didn't really want to know when the offers were coming out, so I blocked it out of my mind," says Tachae.

"Then, one day, it just popped up on my laptop. I thought it was a glitch in the computer system, because I truly never thought I'd get into such a prestigious uni."

Tachae's experience at UQ

Tachae started her program at 23 years old. As an Indigenous woman and technically a mature-age student, she didn't immediately feel at home at UQ.

"Campus life is so different to outside life... it was very daunting at the start," she says.

It didn't take long for that initial uncertainty to melt away, though. As Tachae met more students, she connected with people from all different walks of life and – crucially – some peers with similar backgrounds to her own.

"Being on campus is a really nice experience now," she says.

"I've made lifelong friendships both within and beyond the uni, and the St Lucia campus has become a culturally safe space that really feels like being with family."

Connecting with professors and lecturers has been equally valuable for Tachae, and one teacher stands out for her: Dr Nicole Stormon, the Program Convenor for UQ's Doctor of Dental Medicine.

"I remember one day in my second year, Nicole pulled me aside in the lecture theatre and asked me about who I am, where I'm from, who my mob is," says Tachae.

"I felt really heard in that moment... we went on to do a student/staff partnership and even co-authored a textbook together."

Tachae has since gone on to achieve an impressive list of accomplishments:

- receiving scholarships from the UQ School of Dentistry
- being the keynote speaker at the School's 90th Anniversary Gala Dinner
- speaking at UQ's National Reconciliation Week event
- pursuing her honours research project on the Deadly Dental Home
- becoming the first Indigenous Officer for UQ Herston as part of the Student Experience Committee and helping to establish safe spaces for Indigenous students across multiple UQ campuses.

"I never thought a young girl like me from Moggill would make it [to university]. So, for me, it wasn't just an offer to study – it made me feel like I was capable of anything."

Even with these accolades to her name, though, Tachae hasn't become immune to the imposter syndrome she first faced when applying for that dental assistant job.

"I still sometimes feel like I haven't given enough back to culture,

and I have doubts like 'Am I doing the wrong things?'," she says.

"But even when I feel alone at some points, the UQ community always reassures me and makes me feel whole again."



Indigenous support at UQ

Tachae believes she wouldn't be at UQ without the help of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit. When she felt that studying here was nothing more than a pipedream, members of the unit reached out to provide admission support and advice, and motivated her to back herself.



Learn about UQ's admission scheme for Indigenous students at study.uq.edu.au/indigenous-scheme



Breathing new life into a living Indigenous language

Indigenous languages don't just describe the world around us – they actively shape it. And they, in turn, are shaped by the world.

These languages carry knowledge systems, ethical frameworks and spiritual understandings that have existed and evolved over thousands of years.

In Australia, there are over 250 such languages. One of them is Gumbaynggirr, spoken by the Gumbaynggirr people, whose Country stretches along the Mid North Coast of New South Wales (roughly from the Clarence River to the Nambucca River).

For Gumbaynggirr people, their language is far more than a communication tool. It's a living force – an active conduit between them and Country.

And for Dylan Berger, a Gumbaynggirr, Dhanggati, Yuin and Birpai man completing his PhD at The University of Queensland, this dynamic and living language is the core of his research.

Mixing Indigenous metaphysics with linguistics

Dylan's research sits at the intersection of Indigenous metaphysics and language revitalisation. Through his PhD, he is exploring the mutually beneficial and deeply reciprocal relationship between Gumbaynggirr language and Gumbaynggirr people – and how that relationship exists within Gumbaynggirr Country.

"I'm looking at this through a lens that assumes Gumbaynggirr language is alive and it does impact the world in a very real sense," he says.

"I'm trying to unearth how this relationship benefits both Gumbaynggirr people and Gumbaynggirr language."

To do this, Dylan speaks with Gumbaynggirr individuals and communities about their unique connections with the language and how it enriches their connection to Country.

"Indigenous metaphysics and Indigenous language are the two main domains of my research. My multidisciplinary supervisory team cover these domains at depth, and together they helped me actualise a research project I can take pride in."

Because while these links are intrinsically felt and understood by the people living with them, they're not so simple to explain to the wider public.

Dylan's collaborative PhD experience

For Dylan, pursuing a PhD with the UQ School of Languages and Cultures wasn't just about personal growth or academic curiosity – it was about contributing to something bigger, with the right people around him.

"Supervision and support were key," he says.

"I trusted in the knowledge and experience of my supervisory team. With their support, and the support of the broader network of staff, undertaking a PhD felt a lot more achievable."

Dylan's research has been guided by a pair of supervisors:

- his principal supervisor, Professor Felicity Meakins, a linguistics expert known for her work with Indigenous



Dylan Berger, a Gumbaynggirr, Dhanggati, Yuin and Birpai man, is completing his PhD at The University of Queensland. Dylan is pictured here collaborating with his principal supervisor, Professor Felicity Meakins.

languages across Australia

- his associate supervisor, Professor Norm Sheehan, a Wiradjuri man born in Mudgee, who brings deep knowledge of Indigenous metaphysics to the project.

With their complementary perspectives, this team has helped Dylan shape a project that bridges theory and lived experience, drawing from both Western research methods and Indigenous ways of knowing.

"That idea of 'finding joy in your work' is real during your PhD."

His PhD program has also helped Dylan discover other chances to work with researchers – both locally and across the globe.

"I had opportunities to travel to Canada and Aotearoa for collaborative experiences," he says.

"It has also provided an opportunity to speak with many Gumbaynggirr community members who I don't get to spend a lot of time with."

What led Dylan to his PhD?

Dylan's community is what first inspired him to pursue research.

Gumbaynggirr Country has already made great strides in revitalising their language. While it's still technically classified as critically endangered, many in the community believe it would be almost impossible to lose the language due to the progress that's been made.

But there's still work to be done.

"Gumbaynggirr Country is lacking in researchers who focus on the language space," says Dylan.

"With this in mind, research appeared to be an ideal way to contribute to Gumbaynggirr language revitalisation in my own way."

During his undergraduate studies, Dylan met one of his future supervisors, Norm Sheehan – a connection that encouraged him to explore this research area further.

Dylan's advice for future PhD candidates

Dylan encourages anyone considering a PhD to take that first step, because it's not as impossible as it might seem.

"If you're seriously thinking about a PhD, there's a strong chance you already have the tools to undertake one," he says.

"It's not challenging because it's difficult – it's challenging because it's long."

Want to embark on your own research journey?



Learn more about UQ's PhD program and apply today at study.uq.edu.au/research-programs

Celebrating the heart of Indigenous excellence at UQ

40

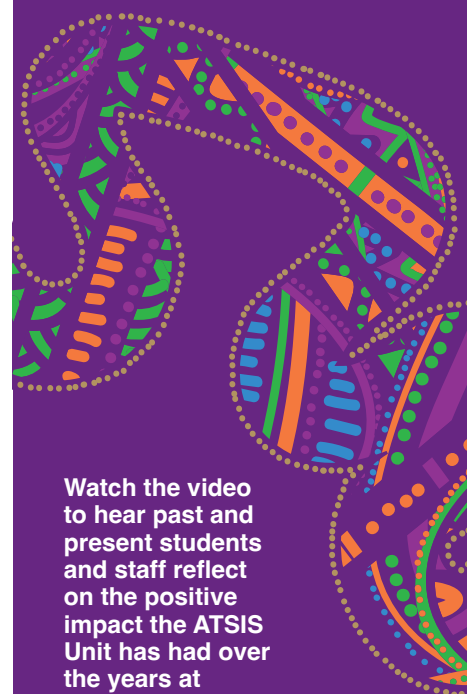
Years of Belonging

The University of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (ATSIS) Unit is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2025, giving the UQ community the opportunity to honour its profound legacy of connection, culture and community.

The ATSIS Unit emerged from the passionate advocacy of trailblazers like Dr Lilla Watson, Dr Kev Carmody and Ribgna Green. Forty years later, every person active within the ATSIS Unit continues this passion, ensuring that it remains the heart of Indigenous excellence and support at UQ.

The ATSIS Unit has always been more than an academic space – it's been a second home. From InspireU to Goorie Berrimpa to shared moments in the common room, it's a place to connect with mob, feel a sense of belonging and build lifelong connections.

Looking forwards, the ATSIS Unit's story will continue to be written – by every student who finds their place, every graduate who gives back, and every person who understands that true excellence flourishes when everyone belongs.



Watch the video to hear past and present students and staff reflect on the positive impact the ATSIS Unit has had over the years at uq.edu.au/atsis-40





Finding your pathway to UQ

Empowered to thrive

A student's journey through UQ College's Tertiary Preparation Program

When Shieda Ballangarry, a proud Goreng Goreng and Gumbaynggirr woman, commenced the Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP) at UQ College, she was ready to take charge of her future.

And that she did. From the outset, Shieda was proactive in setting herself up for success. She made connections within UQ College and The University of Queensland's (UQ) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (ATSIS) Unit straight away, to tap into all the support available to her.

Shieda has now completed her TPP and has started a Bachelor of Arts at UQ. She hopes that her journey – which took a few twists and turns but ultimately led her to where she wants to be – inspires others considering their pathway options to university.

The spark that ignited an exciting future

"I've always been hands-on and creative," Shieda says.

"In high school, I chose subjects like sport, dance, and building – areas where I could shine through practical learning."

At the time, the traditional academic writing skills needed for university felt out of reach for Shieda.

But she wanted to explore all her options for life after high school.

A visit to UQ's Open Day sparked a turning point for her future.

"My mum encouraged me to go, just to explore options," she says.

"We met the amazing team at UQ College, and they introduced me to the TPP.

"They explained how the program would support me in developing academic writing and study skills.

"I signed up that day."

From the start, Shieda approached the program with an enthusiasm to learn.

"I was nervous, but also really excited," she says.

"I knew this was my chance to grow."

Making the most of opportunities

Shieda embraced every opportunity for support and growth. She worked closely with teachers, accessed one-on-one consultations and engaged with student advisers for referencing and assessment guidance. She also sought assistance from UQ College's Student Wellness Advisers to create a Student Access Plan, ensuring she had the right tools to succeed.

"I feel very confident going into university now," Shieda says.

"UQ College helped me build the foundation I needed, not just academically, but personally too.

"It was life changing and I really enjoyed studying there."

The ATSIS Unit also had a big positive impact on Shieda's study experience.

She benefitted from additional tutoring through the unit's Indigenous Tutorial Assistance and Retention (ITAR) program and culturally safe support services.

But the ATSIS Unit provided more than learning assistance to Shieda – they also gave her a welcoming connection to mob.

"Since I started at the university, I have met wonderful students through the ATSIS Unit," she says.

"It's a place where I feel safe, welcomed and where I belong."

Advice for Indigenous students considering pathways to university

"I would 100 per cent recommend the TPP – It's one of the best things I've done," Shieda says.

When it was time to move from the TPP to undergraduate study at UQ, the ATSIS Unit team were there to help ensure the transition was smooth.

"My experience with the ATSIS Unit has also been wonderful.

"All the staff were lovely, very friendly and supportive – they were always ready to give me a helping hand with my inquiries, applying for tutoring and the transition from UQ College to the university."

Shieda's story is a celebration of growth, self-belief, and the power of supportive education. Through UQ College's Tertiary Preparation Program and the dedicated support offered by the ATSIS Unit, Shieda has unlocked her potential and is now confidently shaping her future as she hits the ground running in her undergraduate studies.



Shieda Ballangarry at her UQ College graduation.

UQ College pathway options

Prepare for entry to university and achieve your study goals with UQ College's range of pathways programs.

Tertiary Preparation Program

This full-time (20-25 hours a week) 10-month pathway program empowers you to achieve a QTAC selection rank and meet subject prerequisites to help you get into university. It's taught at UQ's St Lucia campus and the next program start date is 16 February 2026.

Bridging Courses

Study a range of bridging courses face-to-face or online to meet subject prerequisites and fulfil the entry requirements for your university degree of choice.

We offer 4-week intensive face-to-face bridging courses in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematical Methods or Physics. These courses are taught at UQ's St Lucia campus from 24 November to 19 December.

Our online bridging courses allow you to meet a prerequisite for General Mathematics or Pure Mathematics (Mathematical Methods) from home. Study at your own pace and access support, including weekly check-ins with your teacher and optional consultations with UQ College Learning Advisers.

Scholarships

Scholarships and bursaries are available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Secure full funding or 50% reduction to fees for your bridging studies.

Explore our pathway programs at uqcollege.uq.edu.au/study-options



Your first step

Start your journey to UQ with UQ College.

Making the decision to go to university can be an emotional process. You may feel excited but nervous, especially if you need to take an alternate pathway to get there.

At UQ College, we have several study options to support you to achieve your dreams – whether it be our Tertiary Preparation Program to gain a selection rank or a bridging course to meet subject prerequisites.

As a UQ College student, you will already feel like you belong at UQ. Most of our courses are taught at the UQ St Lucia campus where you will always be connected to mob and culture with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit.

Find out more about UQ College at uqcollege.uq.edu.au



Strength and support in a tailored journey



FOR many students, the journey to university can feel overwhelming, especially for those who may be the first in their family to attend or who come from regional communities.

But for one Flinders University staff member, Nstarzia Osman, supporting these students is more than a job; it's a calling grounded in care, culture and connection.

As an Indigenous Outreach and Pathways Officer within Yungkurinithi, they're part of a team dedicated to walking alongside students, helping them navigate the transition into university and ensuring they feel supported every step of the way.

"I've been at Flinders for four years now," they share. "Before that, I worked in disability care and hospitality. In every role, the common thread has always been helping people, whether through care, service or education."

That passion for helping others is what eventually led them to higher education. "Now, in this role, I get to bring together my love of education, culture and community in a way that feels really meaningful."

Commencing students can often find the first step into university life the most daunting and Nstarzia knows this all too well when she began her degree at Flinders University, but what she didn't know then was that her journey would come full circle. "I know how overwhelming the transition can be and how much it means to have someone walking alongside you during that time."

The work is deeply personal and tailored. "Every student's journey is different. Some need practical support, like help with scholarships or accommodation while others need encouragement or just

someone to listen. Our goal is to make sure students feel culturally safe, confident and supported once they're here."

From one-on-one guidance to large scale engagement programs with Port Power Football Club, the role blends planning, outreach and student support in a way that's both varied and fulfilling.

The work is also far reaching often involving rural school visits from Ceduna to Alice Springs and at times as far as Darwin. Community engagement and on-campus experiences, like *Life in the Uni Lane*, offer an immersive program where students across South Australia spend a day at Flinders, exploring disciplines and imagining their future.

"I really enjoy that variety. Each group of students brings something unique and seeing the way a single interaction can spark confidence or change someone's perspective about their future – that's incredibly rewarding."

You'll often find Nstarzia and the team working closely with student services, academic staff and cultural support networks to ensure a holistic experience for every student.

"We all share the same goal which is to make sure students succeed," they say. "Our team is unique in that we bring cultural knowledge, lived experience and a genuine passion for supporting students. We're not just staff but mentors, role models and advocates."

For the Yungkurinithi team, true community engagement starts with building lasting relationships and when asked what they find most rewarding about working with mob, their answer is clear: "Watching students grow in self-belief. From questioning whether they belong, to becoming proud and thriving in their studies."



Top pic: Yungkurinithi Outreach Team and students, Aboriginal Power Cup.
Below pic: Wayne Bucksin and Nstarzia Osman, Yungkurinithi Open Day stall.



Yungkurinithi student engagement and community network

Indigenous Admission Scheme (IAS)

The Indigenous Admission Scheme (IAS) provides an alternative pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into Flinders University. If you are interested applying, please email IAS@flinders.edu.au

Indigenous Student Support Officers (ISSOs)

ISSO's work directly with students to provide one-on-one support throughout the student lifecycle on a range of matters, from pre-enrolment advice through to post graduate studies and assist with pathways to further study or employment.

Elders on Campus

Across Flinders SA and NT campuses. Elders on Campus can provide cultural mentoring, support, advice, information and referral to support the wellbeing and success of students studying at Flinders.

Accommodation

There are multiple accommodation options depending on your circumstances. Flinders is the only South Australian University with on-campus accommodation.

Scholarships

Flinders has a range of scholarships available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to assist in meeting accommodation, study and living costs.

For further information please contact

1800 641 811

+61 8 8201 3033

Yungkurinithi@flinders.edu.au



Discover More





N'arwee't Dr Carolyn Briggs AM shaping the future of Indigenous business leadership



IF YOU visit Monash University's Caulfield campus on Boon Wurrung Country, you might see N'arwee't Dr Carolyn Briggs AM

walking arm in arm with a student. N'arwee't is the Master of Indigenous Business Leadership (MoIBL) Elder in Residence at Monash Business School, working closely with the cohort.

"It's all about being an active listener," said N'arwee't. "I listen to their stories one-on-one. I'll tell them how I worked in Communities, and ask about their interests. They've told me their personal stories and journeys."

N'arwee't – meaning knowledge holder – is a senior Boon Wurrung Elder and founder of the Boon Wurrung Foundation.

She's an academic, a successful business woman, and has been integral in protecting Boon Wurrung culture, heritage and language for over 50 years. She's a woman of many titles, with her advocacy having awarded her a Member of the Order of Australia.

"She was the perfect fit to be the Elder in Residence, because she has such a rich history and strong story when it comes to both business and leadership," said Katrina Johnson, MoIBL Co-Director. "She comes alongside our Indigenous business leaders where they're at. She has a beautiful way of encouraging and also challenging them to think bigger."

Monash's MoIBL, a joint offering from the William Cooper Institute and Monash Business School, was the first degree of its kind in Australia. The program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to take up their rightful place in executive-level positions and on boards to lead governance. With Indigenous-led design, the program teaches students to merge cultural knowledge with Western concepts and choose how they want to lead.

"Having her presence at the campus is very calming for the group," said Daniel Howell, current MoIBL student. "It reminds us that it's more than a master's and a piece of paper – it's a way to give back to our Community."

Students come to the MoIBL from across the country. "Some of them have never been in a university environment before. Or they have been rejected by education or had traumatic experiences in education all their life," Johnson explained.

"N'arwee't sees that in people. She's extremely observant. She puts effort into building a genuine relationship with students, asking them about who they are, their people, and where they're from," said Johnson. "It helps them realise they have a place, that they belong, that this is their time to shine and grow. You see students literally square up their shoulders and walk a little taller."

"Her presence affirms why we're there, and that Indigenous people do have a place at the table," Howell agreed.

Johnson and Howell share the same favourite memory with N'arwee't. She took the cohort on the Dirty Mile walking tour through Fitzroy's Aboriginal history. It ended at a large Moreton Bay fig tree at the top of Gertrude Street, where the group huddled together.

N'arwee't told stories of the activists and leaders who used to meet at that very tree to hold Community meetings, which she attended as a child.

"Students were leaning in and soaking up every single word," said Johnson.

"It was just special to walk with an Elder through that street and hear the history of how it used to be back in the day, and how much it's changed," said Howell.

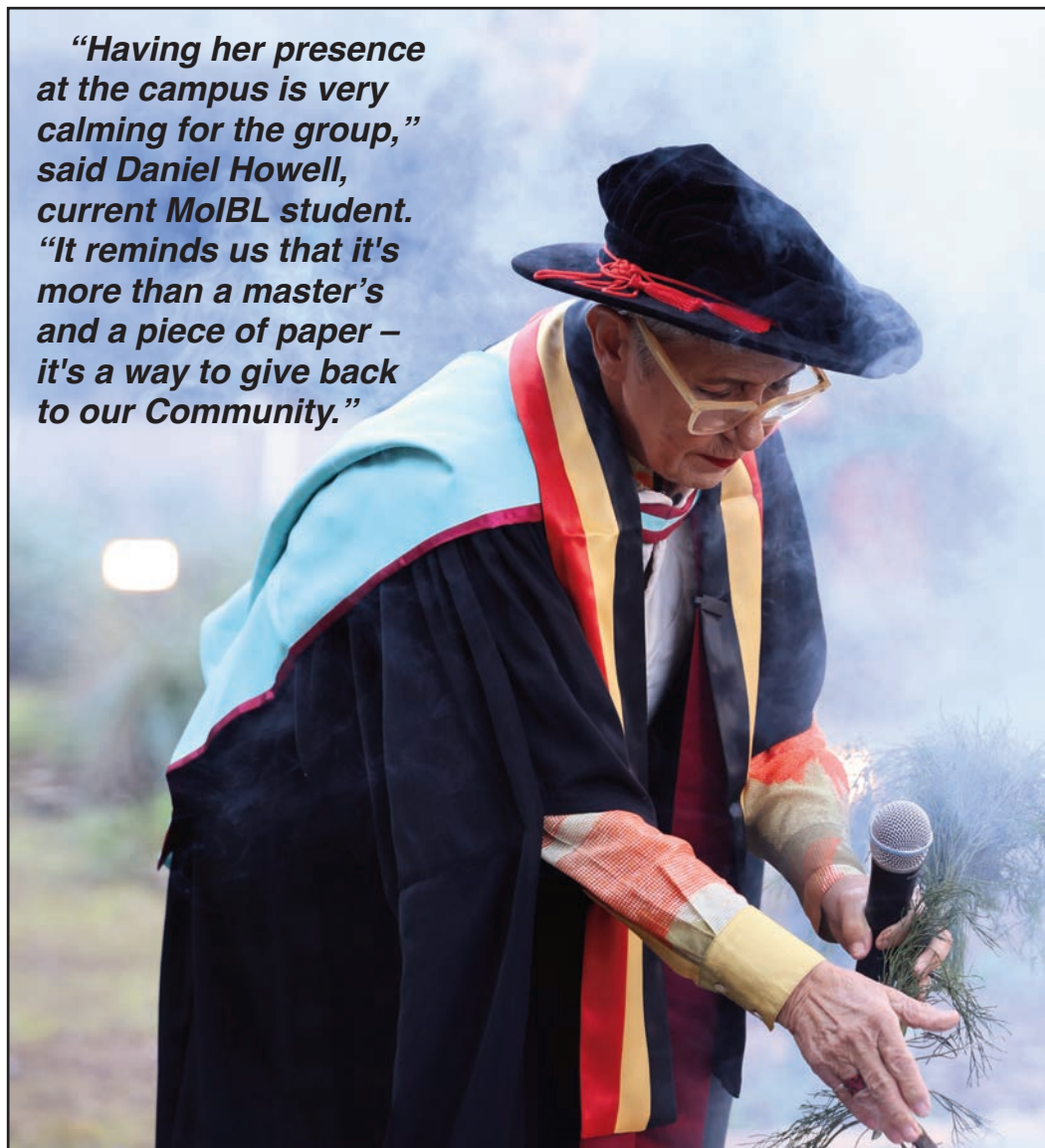
For Monash students and staff alike, N'arwee't is a business mentor and cultural anchor. "She's generous with her wisdom and I love the way she teaches from her own experiences," said Johnson. "When I'm her age, I hope I still have enough fire in my belly to do what she's doing."

"She's still doing research, she's still traveling, and anytime we ask her to be there, she will show up for the students no matter what," said Johnson. "She lights up the room every time she comes."

For N'arwee't, who began her research journey at Monash back in the 70s, it's a full circle moment mentoring the MoIBL students. She believes they're continuing a legacy of staunch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. "I'm getting to see the fruits of the early activists," said N'arwee't.

"If you've got a sense of what your purpose is in your community, there are resources out there. We just need to know how to tell the story," said N'arwee't. "I hope to see the students achieve their goal, however they measure success."

Find out more about the Master of Indigenous Business Leadership at Monash Business School.



N'arwee't Dr Carolyn Briggs AM attending a welcome ceremony for the 2023 graduating student group.



2023 student group graduation.



N'arwee't Dr Carolyn Briggs AM walking in Fitzroy.



Learning about legacy leadership under the historic Moreton Bay Fig Tree in Fitzroy with 2024 student group.



We acknowledge and pay respect to the Elders and Traditional Owners of the land on which our Australian campuses stand.



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Australia's first Master of Indigenous Business Leadership program, co-created with Indigenous academics, leaders and Elders.

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Learn in a space where your identity is respected, your voice is valued and your leadership can thrive.

Find out more



William Cooper Institute and Monash Business School jointly offer the Master of Business Leadership, a transformational leadership program designed to strengthen Australia's Indigenous workforce and shape a positive future for Indigenous Australians.

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Grow your career and connect with Mob at the university where you belong



UNIVERSITY study opens doors to rewarding careers and opportunities to make a difference for mob and community.

It's often a journey of lifelong learning, building on prior education – such as vocational training – and skills gained through work, community involvement, and lived experience.

Charles Sturt University has ranked first among all Australian public universities for full-time undergraduate employment for eight consecutive years.

According to the 2025 Good Universities Guide, 89 per cent of Charles Sturt undergraduates secure full-time employment within four months of graduating.

The university also earned a five-star rating for postgraduate employment, with 91 per cent of graduates employed full-time within the same timeframe.

First Nations Student Connect provides support throughout your studies, offering a space to connect with Mob and access services like academic skills support, tutoring, career development and more.

Alicia Johnson, a graduate of the Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health), said she has “the life I do because of my degree”.

“My life is amazing – I have a beautiful family, and I get to work in a field where I create change. Supporting mob in my work is incredibly special. I always knew I wanted to work with Aboriginal communities to drive change. I loved education, but I knew I had more to learn.”

Reflecting on her journey as a single mum balancing study and work, Alicia said “I was so fortunate to have an incredible support network at Charles Sturt”.

“I came through with a group of Aboriginal students, all navigating life together and leaning on each other. I loved online study – it gave me flexibility and control. I could work from home, stay with my family,



Alana Nixon, a Bachelor of Nursing graduate.

keep my job to pay the bills, and still have ongoing support from the university. That meant everything.”

Like many students, Alicia believes the journey was worth it.

“Being able to support mob in my field – I'm part of change. I can empower people through my role. It's humbling. It's special.”

Vanessa Robb, a graduate of the Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary), also followed her passion for making a difference through education.

“Ever since I was little, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. Pop always said that when he was younger, he didn't have a voice.

Now that we do, we need to use it. That message stuck with me – don't stand back, take the opportunities,” she said.

Opportunities that weren't available to previous generations are now within reach for many First Nations families.

“Pop definitely inspired me to go to university. He wanted us to

have the education he couldn't. He passed away during my degree, but I could feel him with me. He pushed me through. So, we did it,” Vanessa said.

Family support was vital, especially when studying off Country.

“Moving away from family was hard. You rely on them, and

suddenly it's just you,” Vanessa said.

“But then you get to uni and realise – it still feels like home. The First Nations Student Centre was my safe space. You connect with mob on campus – they know who you are.

“I love being a First Nations teacher. It's a unique experience. You're not just teaching – you're sharing moments, sharing culture. Studying at Charles Sturt let me bring our culture into the classroom and ensure it's acknowledged and loved.”

Nursing is another powerful pathway at Charles Sturt. Alana Nixon, a Bachelor of Nursing graduate, followed her calling into the course.

“Our family is full of women – I'm one of three girls – and we've always had that maternal instinct. It's beautiful to be in healthcare, sharing that sense of responsibility to our community. Everything I do is to make my family and community proud,” Alana said.

“I realised I wanted to care for people when I cared for my grandmother, who had dementia. I was just a teenager, but it taught me the importance of caring for family and community.

“Studying at Charles Sturt was a positive experience. The First Nations Student Centre was incredible – the staff and students formed lifelong connections. I've studied at other universities since, and they don't offer the same support. That makes a real difference.”

The journey doesn't end with graduation. It continues through community impact, workplace contributions, and further study.

“Being an Aboriginal nurse in the community is a privilege. There's an unspoken connection when your patient recognises you – and you recognise them. You do everything you can to make their experience better. Being that person, offering that care – it's an honour,” Alana said.



Vanessa Robb, a graduate of the Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary).



Alicia Johnson, a graduate of the Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health).



Charles Sturt
University
—
First Nations

Vanessa Robb, graduate of the
Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary)

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Charles Sturt University - TEQSA Provider Identification: PRV12018 (Australian University). CRICOS Provider: 00005F.
CRICOS course: 017967E

Your success is our success

Studying at university is a path that branches in almost every direction; empowering your career ambitions and so much more! It's not just about working towards your dream job—you'll also be growing into the person you want to be!

While studying you'll make lifelong friendships, expand how you see the world, push yourself out of your comfort zone, and become a more confident and curious person.

Your time at university will be a period you look back on with pride and joy, and it's a path well worth considering.

If you choose to enrol at UNSW, we'll be there to give guidance on how to achieve your academic, social and cultural goals. We can't wait to see you on campus!

— Your Nura Gili team



Apply for UNSW's ATAR-free entry pathway

If you want to study a degree in **Law, Health, Medicine, Social Work, Business, Education, Science or Engineering** we've got you covered with **UNSW's Indigenous Preparatory Programs!**

Our Pre-Programs are three-week intensive residential programs held at the Kensington campus in Sydney. They offer a holistic pre-entry uni experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students without the need for an ATAR.

Pre-Programs are both an alternative entry pathway to UNSW and a degree-specific preparatory program, meaning you can hit the ground running on day one of your degree!



Applications close on **Monday 6 October** — scan the QR code or visit unsw.to/indigenous-pre-programs to learn more and apply.

Got a question? Email us via nuragili@unsw.edu.au

Key information



Open to Indigenous peoples of all ages across Australia



Runs from 16 November to 5 December, 2025



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Moudrack Sjariet

Studied Bachelor of Medical Studies/Doctor of Medicine through our Pre-Medicine program

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"I moved from Kempsey to Sydney to study Social Work at UNSW because I want to help my community. The Pre-Social Work Program helped me connect with mob at UNSW, build my confidence, and get ready to start my degree."

– Jayden

Bachelor of Social Work (Honours)



Scan the QR code to apply for the UNSW Social Work Pre-Programs pathway

Have a question? Email us via ada.indigenous@unsw.edu.au

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At UNSW Arts, Design & Architecture (ADA), your studies can lead to careers in media, performing arts, design, fine arts, construction, architecture, linguistics, education, policy, and social sciences.

Our graduates become artists, animators, educators, designers, film and media professionals, journalists, policy advisors, and social researchers — making an impact in communities across Australia and around the world.

Through the Indigenous Admission Scheme (IAS), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can apply for ADA degrees without an ATAR. The IAS recognises your potential and supports you to take the first step toward a rewarding career and achieving your dreams.



Scan the QR code to learn more about UNSW's Indigenous Admissions Scheme

Have a question? Email us via ada.indigenous@unsw.edu.au

"Moving to Sydney to study Fine Arts at has been exciting and demanding. At UNSW I found a safe, supportive community where I built lasting connections, grew my creative practice, and gained the confidence to pursue art as a career."

– Gosha

Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours)





Finding a Path Forward: Lorenzo's Journey Through the Indigenous Pre-Law Program



FOR Lorenzo Nimmet, studying law was something he'd only ever quietly considered, unsure if it would lead to anything. But

through the Indigenous Pre-Law Program at UNSW Law & Justice, that ambition became a clear and achievable goal.

Lorenzo is currently in his first year of a combined Bachelor of Laws/ Bachelor of Criminology and Criminal Justice degree at UNSW.

"Pre-programs made uni feel less scary," Lorenzo shared. "You walk in on your first day of class already knowing what to expect, you're not starting from zero."

That sense of preparedness is one of the program's most immediate impacts. Designed to introduce Indigenous students to law in a culturally safe and supportive setting, the program offers more than academic skills; it fosters confidence, community, and clarity.

From workshops with leading law firms to excursions that bring legal concepts to life, the program immerses students in the real-world practice of law. One standout experience for Lorenzo was the Gilbert + Tobin excursion.

"It gave me a real insight into what working in law actually looks like day-to-day," he said. "It helped



Law student, Lorenzo Nimmet.

me understand the kind of skills that are needed, and where I might fit into the profession."

That insight was transformative. For many participants, the program is their first experience seeing themselves reflected in the legal world—not just as students, but as future professionals. It marks a shift from merely imagining a career in law to actively planning for one.

"The program made my goals feel real," Lorenzo explained. "Before, they were just ideas I kept to myself. Now, they feel achievable. I know there's a path forward."

That path is paved not only

with academic guidance but also with deep emotional and cultural support. Lorenzo spoke warmly of the staff, especially Charmaine Mumbulla, UNSW Law & Justice's Director of Indigenous Legal Education, whose presence was a grounding force throughout the experience.

"Law staff like Charmaine really understood us. When things felt overwhelming, they kept us grounded. You never felt like you had to go through it on your own."

Charmaine, who leads the Indigenous Legal Education team at UNSW Law & Justice, believes the program is a key step that helps show students how they can turn their dreams into reality.

"The Pre-Law program is not just about study, it's about building confidence and connection. We've seen many Indigenous students come through this program and go on to do great things — in courtrooms, communities and across the world. This is where their journey begins."

It's this supportive approach that distinguishes the Indigenous Pre-Law Program. Students aren't just prepared for university; they're embraced by a community that understands their journey and supports them every step of the way.

"I really liked how we were all learning together," Lorenzo said. "There was a strong sense of community, and even the excursions, like going to court, made the experience more real and connected to what studying law is actually like."

The community within the Pre-Law Program is genuinely powerful. Students find peers who share their experiences, mentors who understand their challenges, and a space where their identity is not just respected but celebrated.

"The support was honestly next level," Lorenzo reflected. "It wasn't just academic support—it was emotional support too. You're never alone in the program."

For future students thinking about the program, Lorenzo has a simple message: take the leap.

"I'd tell future students to not overthink it—just do it," he urged. "Talk to Charmaine, ask questions, and take that step. Even if you're unsure, just give it a go. You can always decide afterwards, but don't miss the opportunity."

As UNSW Law & Justice continues to invest in Indigenous education and leadership, programs like this are essential. They don't just open doors—they create pathways. And for students like Lorenzo, those pathways lead to a future where they are not only studying law but also shaping it.

Applications for the Indigenous Pre-Law Program close on Monday 6 October 2025. You can apply here: [insert web address or QR Code](#).

To find out more about the program reach out to Charmaine Mumbulla, Director of Indigenous Legal Education at c.mumbulla@unsw.edu.au



Your future starts now. Study law at UNSW.

Study at Australia's #1 Law School*

UNSW Law & Justice has a long, proud history of supporting Indigenous leaders of tomorrow.

Over 140 Indigenous law graduates have gone on to lead inspiring professional and personal lives in areas ranging from legal practice to international diplomacy and community service.

Apply for the Indigenous Law & Justice pathway programs to begin your journey now.

*QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025.



UNSW
SYDNEY

Find out more





Community-based delivery at NIKERI Institute



THE National Indigenous Knowledges Education Research and Innovation (NIKERI)

Institute at Deakin University provides access to university for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through its distinctive Community Based Delivery (CBD) program. The CBD program was developed to offer Indigenous students from across the country the opportunity to access higher education with the flexibility to maintain family, work, and fulfil cultural obligations while studying without having to relocate from home.

Today, more than 1100 graduates have completed their studies at NIKERI Institute from all states and territories in Australia. By leveraging the best of Indigenous and Western Knowledge systems NIKERI offers students a study experience that values their individual perspectives and experiences alongside a formal qualification.

Current Bachelor of Bachelor of Early Childhood and Primary Education student, Vanessa Heng, a Goreng woman from Western Australia says the alternative entry process enabled her to pursue university.

"Growing up in a small country

town of WA and being a young mother and early school leaver, I didn't think I was good enough to attend university until I was told about NIKERI Institute at Deakin University."

The learning environment brings together students all with their own individual perspectives and experiences. Surrounded in class with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers, students study in a space that prioritises First Nations Knowledges and cultural safety. Vanessa says this sense of community is vital.

"From my first enquiry I felt like I belonged. It feels like my family, my home away from home."

"The teaching and student services staff have made my university journey comfortable and a smooth transition providing all the support I need. I am in a learning environment that I am accepted to learn my way without judgement."

Bachelor of Nursing student, Whitney Seden from Darwin agrees.

"The best thing about studying at NIKERI is the focused support you are provided as soon as you are accepted into the program. It is flexible enough for you to continue your work and personal requirements at home whilst also studying. I don't think I would

have been to complete my study effectively if it wasn't for Community Based Delivery and the support provided by the teaching and NIKERI staff."

NIKERI has a proud history of empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from across Australia to pursue careers in health, education, arts, law, research and environment management.

Whitney is looking forward to becoming one of a growing number of qualified Indigenous nurses.

"I have a passion in working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare and see the requirement for more culturally appropriate staff needed in the profession. I've always had a passion to care and provide support to my community, so nursing was the perfect opportunity to undertake to pursue this career."

Vanessa is also looking to contribute to improving outcomes for community by becoming a teacher who will influence the next generation of young people.

"I am now into my second year of study, I'm feeling strong and very proud of myself knowing I am the change for the children. I will be taking my way of teaching into classrooms with the strength and encouragement from NIKERI."



NIKERI Institute Bachelor of Early Childhood and Primary Education student, Vanessa Heng.



Learn today. Lead tomorrow.

Experience a university degree with the flexibility to maintain your work, family and cultural commitments.

Study education, arts, law, nursing, social work, land and sea country management, public health or Indigenous research through our Community Based Delivery.

deakin.edu.au/nikeri
1800 063 383

Deakin University CRICOS Provider Code: 00113B

NIKERI
INSTITUTE





2026 Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship round is open for applications

The Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying entry level health qualifications in 2026.

Emily Hunter is a proud Nyikina and Kokatha woman from the West Kimberley. With the help of the Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme, named after her late, great father, she is now Senior Nurse Administrator at Broome Hospital.

If you're thinking about studying health, this scholarship could change your life. You'll receive mentoring as well as financial, cultural, and other support.

Applications are open from the 1st September until the 31st October.



Visit iaha.com.au/scholarships to apply or call 1800 413 933.

Don't wait — your future starts today.



Scholarship helping for decades



THE Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship, just like the proud Nyikina man Dr Arnold 'Puggy' Hunter after which it's named, has had a significant impact on the wellbeing and lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for decades.

Puggy Hunter was a pioneer in Aboriginal health, using his background in community development to advocate for his mob, locally and nationally. Among his many achievements, Puggy was involved in establishing and governing local Aboriginal Medical Services and was the inaugural Chairperson of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation on its establishment in 1991, advocating for the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership nationally.

Through his many roles, Puggy passionately and tirelessly fought in the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The many reflections of his leadership highlight his ability to do this in a culturally responsive and culturally centered way, in relationship with his people, as well as the respect and regard in which he was held by politicians

and governments.

The scholarship named in his honour has continued his legacy, supporting thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to succeed in their studies, and to lead change in how services are delivered with our people.

On 1 July 2024, the Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship became the first Commonwealth funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health program to transition from a mainstream provider into the hands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control, a fitting moment for the program.

Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) and the National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP), two national community-controlled organisations, partnered with Rural Doctors Network to ensure the culturally safe continuation of the program. More than 100 Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarships are awarded every year, and each provides up to \$15,000 per year for the duration of eligible qualification.

Leveraging their experiences and expertise in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

development, and with the support of the Hunter family and key stakeholders, IAHA and NAATSIHWP are committed to ensuring that the scholarship is equitable and responds to the needs of students and our communities. This includes not only providing financial assistance, but facilitating access to mentoring, connectedness, cultural support and other development opportunities which empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to excel.

Donna Murray, Wiradyuri and Wonnarua woman and Chief Executive Officer of IAHA, said of the program that "the Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship invests in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students coming from diverse backgrounds, who want to carry forward the fight for health equity. It is a flexible and culturally responsive program helping our next generation of health workforce not only to aspire, but to thrive in their studies and beyond".

Applications for the 2026 scholarship round are now open and close 31 October 2025. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people studying a health qualification in 2026 are encouraged to apply now.

Visit: www.iaha.com.au



Ms Emily Hunter is the daughter of the late Dr Puggy Hunter.



From Student to Superstar



MEET Vanessa Sewell, a proud Worimi woman from the Mid-North Coast of NSW, whose path in science is closely tied to her culture and community.

After completing a Bachelor of Animal Science (Honours) in 2019, Vanessa began a PhD in molecular biology and parasitology, focusing on livestock parasites – an important issue for regional farming communities. Alongside her research, she became actively involved with the Oorala Aboriginal Centre as a Student Ambassador, supporting her peers and contributing to Oorala’s student programs and events. This role sparked her ongoing commitment to mentoring.

During her doctoral studies, Vanessa also worked on broader initiatives across the university. She helped develop a staff website offering guidance on respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including practical resources on terminology and cultural safety. In recognition of her efforts, she received the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Science Award from the Australian Academy of Science in 2022. She later convened the Academy’s Public Speaker Series in 2023 and was featured in Cosmos magazine’s 2024 list of 40+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander STEM Leaders.



Her leadership extended into mentoring roles as a Max Schroder Indigenous Mentor at UNE and as a panellist for the Academy of Science’s NAIDOC Week. In 2024, as her PhD was nearing completion, she received the Oorala Award for Higher Degree Research Academic Excellence and took on a part-time Associate Lecturer role in Indigenous Knowledges within the School of Environmental and Rural Science.

In 2025, Vanessa moved into a full-time Lecturer position with the Oorala Aboriginal Centre, teaching in the TRACKS Tertiary Preparation Program and undergraduate units. That same year she was named one of Australia’s 2025–2026 Superstars of STEM, a national program celebrating women and non-binary scientists.

Reflecting on this recognition, Vanessa highlighted her focus: “My focus is on helping Indigenous students succeed in STEM, both by promoting STEM to high school students and supporting current university students in their studies. I am passionate about inspiring young Indigenous students to pursue STEM.”

Vanessa’s journey reflects a balance of academic achievement, cultural pride, and a strong commitment to supporting future Indigenous students in science.

TRACKS
Tertiary
Preparation
Program

Artwork by Tyler Stackman-Green x Oorala

une.edu.au/tracks
University of New England CRICOS Provider Number 00003G | TEQSA ID PRV12054



TRACKS Tertiary Preparation Program

Are you curious about university?

Do you have ambition to become a scientist, nurse, archaeologist, teacher or psychologist? Or perhaps you want to learn more about business, law, agriculture or social work.

Join UNE’s TRACKS program where you will transform your aspirations into reality. Connect with a strong community that recognises and values your unique strengths. You’ll learn all about university and the study know-how needed to transition into your chosen university course.

Unlock your future at UNE and apply today!

TRACKS Facts

🕒 Duration	1 year full-time or up to 4 years part-time
📅 Start	Trimester 1, Trimester 2, Trimester 3
💻 Mode	Online from home or on campus in Armidale
📋 No. of Units (Subjects)	Total of 6 units (36 credit points). Up to 2 undergraduate units for free*
📍 Campus	Armidale Campus
📖 Entry Requirements	Attendance at an orientation program in Armidale or online
💰 Fees	Fee Exempt
📖 Tuition	Access our free tutoring program

*Conditions apply

UNE Oorala Aboriginal Centre
Freecall 1800 622 384



**Oorala
Aboriginal
Centre**



From mum to mentor

By ROB FABINY



FROM the remote outskirts of Geraldton to the front of the classroom, proud Nyamal woman Shanae Clohessy has turned her dream of becoming a teacher into a powerful reality.

Thanks to fierce determination, a toddler in tow and the life-changing support of a CQUniversity scholarship, the recent Bachelor of Education (Primary) graduate committed deeply to her studies, even bringing her daughter to every tutorial from when she was just eight days old.

"My university journey hasn't been easy, especially over the past two years as I've worked to balance family life, study and parenting," Shanae said.

"But with strong support from my lecturers, classmates and family, I was able to persevere and stay focused on my goal."

After graduating high school in 2019, Shanae wasn't sure what she wanted to do – but she knew she didn't want to move away to study.

Her ATAR also didn't meet direct entry requirements for university, but she successfully completed CQUniversity's Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS) program through Geraldton Universities Centre, paving her way to a degree.

A significant part of Shanae's success came from the support of a CQUniversity scholarship from the ARC Infrastructure corporation through the Kate Mullin Association.

Beyond easing financial pressure and enabling her to attend every tutorial,

Shanae said the scholarship had a profound impact on her confidence and sense of belonging.

"When I applied, and was selected, it gave me a massive boost in confidence," Shanae explained.

"It showed me that other people believed in me and recognised my potential – even when I sometimes doubted myself."

Shanae said the scholarship team's regular check-ins, encouragement and genuine support reminded her that she wasn't navigating her academic journey alone.

"The scholarship helped me feel seen, valued and capable. Knowing that someone was in my corner made all the difference, especially on the hardest days," she said.

"I'll always be grateful for the opportunities it gave me, not only to succeed in my studies, but to grow in confidence as a mother, student and future teacher."

One of Shanae's proudest accomplishments is that she never gave up. She continued full-time study while raising a young child, overcoming every challenge to finally reach her dream: to help shape young minds and be a strong role model for the next generation.

"It's been a tough four years, but I can now proudly say: I did it – and I gave it everything I had."

She is now incredibly excited to be teaching her very own class.

CQUniversity celebrates Shanae's incredible achievement and her inspiring dedication. Her story is a powerful reminder of how support and perseverance can lead to achieving ambitious goals.



CQ University Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Nick Klomp with graduate Shanae Clohessy.

See it. Be it.

You're not the first to feel unsure. To wonder if university is for you. But many First Nations students have walked this path before you—and found the course, support, and community they were looking for at CQU.

With campuses close to home, flexible online options, and dedicated First Nations support staff, we're here to help you succeed. From the moment we welcome you in, to guiding you every step of the way, you'll feel supported—because you can See it. Be it.

cqu.edu.au/firstnations

Call 07 4930 9250 or email indigenous@cqu.edu.au



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**Indigenous
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Division**

CRICOS: 00219C | TEQSA: PRV12073 | RTO: 40939



Law graduate leading with heart, from student ambassador to advocate



FOR proud Ngunawal woman and recent Western Sydney University law graduate, Jess Oehm,

her journey from campus to courtroom began with a legacy of leadership as a Student Ambassador inspiring other young people through education and a desire to advocate for her community.

Wanting to become a civil law barrister, Jess completed her Bachelor of Law and Bachelor of Business (Human Resource Management) double degree at Western and was the 2024 recipient of the Outstanding Indigenous Student Award at the University's annual NAIDOC Awards.

Jess was involved with Western's Pathways to Dreaming program which engages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Year 7 to Year 12 in the opportunities that await them in higher education and connects them with student mentors.

"I came on as a Student Ambassador after being involved



Jess Oehm – Western Sydney University. Photo: Yann Le Berreto.

in the Pathways to Dreaming program as a student in high school. I was a Student Ambassador in the program for seven years and I loved giving

back to the program that helped me succeed," Jess said.

"Take every opportunity that you are given and never doubt yourself."

In addition to her ambassadorship, Jess has been a tutor with Western's Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education since 2023.

During her studies, Jess completed a cadetship working as a paralegal and research assistant at Gilbert + Tobin and has now recently started a new graduate position with Legal Aid NSW in the Judge Bob Belleir graduate program.

Jess also undertook the New South Wales Bar Association's First Nations Clerkship, describing it as a highlight learning opportunity.

"I was honoured to be able to undertake the First Nations Bar Association Clerkship, it was an amazing opportunity that gave me clarity in what I wanted to be able to do, as well as seeing some amazing advocates in practice," she said.

"I spent a week at the Land and Environment Court, three days at the NSW Supreme Court and two days at the Downing Centre District Court."

Reflecting on her studies at Western Sydney University, Jess says her law lecturers and the

Pathways to Dreaming program in high school had helped her to realise her career ambitions.

"I was in a law workshop with School of Law senior lecturer, Francine Feld. We were in the Moot Court at Campbelltown, and I was allowed to be the judge for the session.

"I loved being there and listening to Francine speak about the law and how justice was achieved. From that moment on, I wanted to be a lawyer.

"I am most passionate about the impact I can have on Community, and my degree has given me the knowledge to be able to advocate fiercely for those in need."

Western Sydney University is proudly celebrating 30 years of impact, excellence, and social justice through its School of Law, which is educating the next generation of legal professionals and advocates.

Students, alumni, staff, and special guests came together on Thursday, 24 July to mark the milestone and reflect on the School's significant contribution to Western Sydney and beyond.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ENTRY PROGRAM

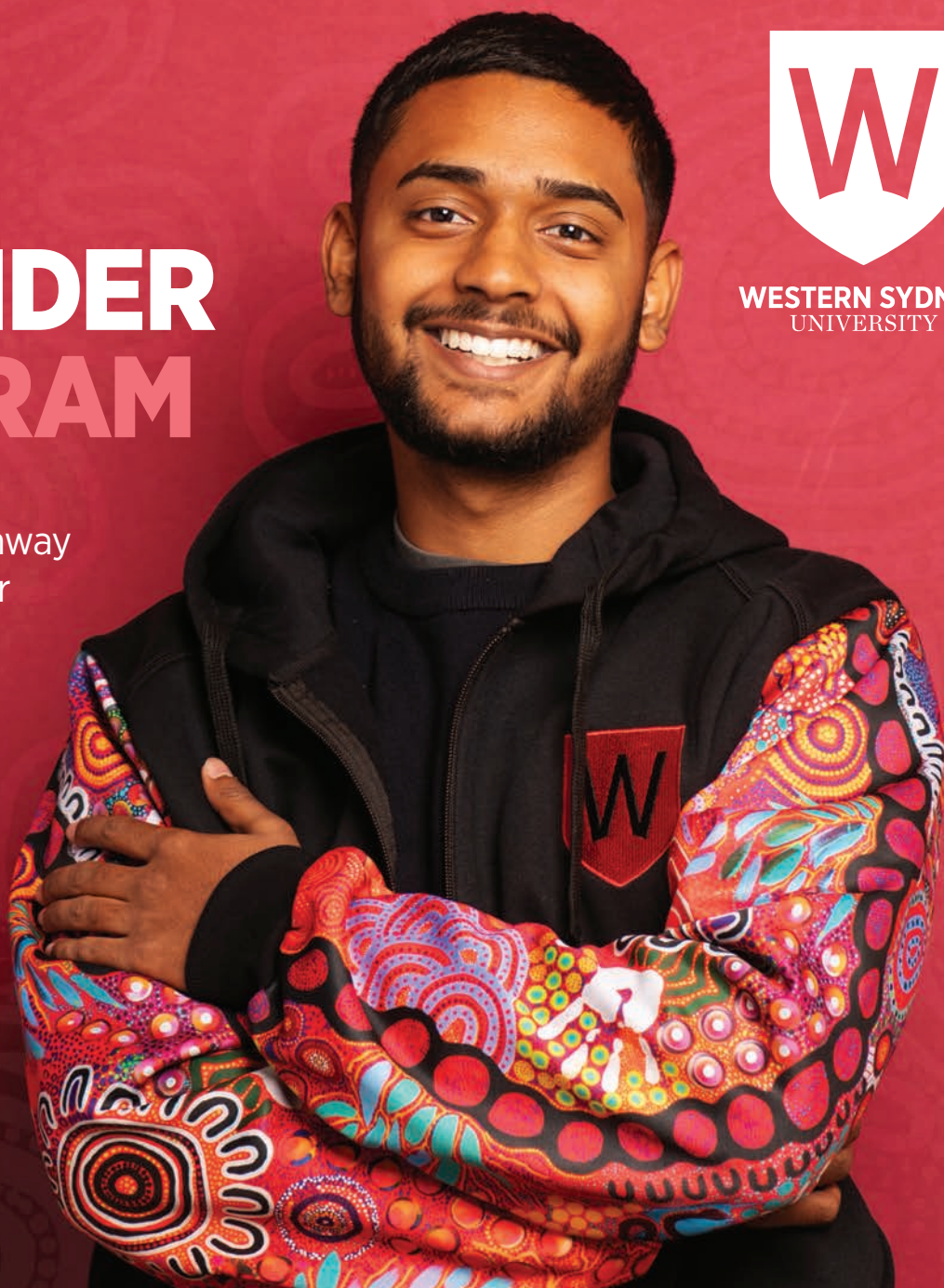
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Entry Program is an alternative entry pathway based on the successful completion of our entry assessments.

It's about your potential,
not your prior educational experience.

**ASSESSMENT DATES FOR
2026 ENTRY: 18-21 NOVEMBER**



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Doctors train for Territory



IF YOU'RE passionate about becoming a doctor and making a genuine difference in your community, there's never been a better time to start that journey.

Applications are now open for the CDU Menzies Medical Program, a five-year course leading to a Bachelor of Clinical Sciences Medicine/Doctor of Medicine degree. This unique program from Charles Darwin University and Menzies School of Health Research allows you to study and train as a doctor in the Northern Territory with a strong focus on First Nations health, rural medicine and community-led care.

Australia faces a critical shortage of doctors in rural and remote areas. This program directly addresses that need by developing doctors committed to working in regional communities who value culturally responsive healthcare. It also creates pathways for First Nations people to become the healthcare leaders their communities need.

Dedicated places

Forty places are available in 2026 with dedicated sub-quotas for NT-based First Nations applicants and First Nations students from across Australia. Priority consideration goes to applicants who demonstrate a genuine commitment to supporting underserved populations.

Extra quotas exist for NT residents and students from rural or remote areas, ensuring those who understand these communities can join the healthcare solution.

Real-world training

Students complete extensive clinical placements across the NT, working in diverse healthcare settings from Darwin and Alice Springs hospitals to remote community health clinics. This hands-on experience starts early, providing invaluable exposure to healthcare delivery in a range of environments.

You'll learn from expert local clinicians and respected First Nations health leaders with deep experience and knowledge of the region and its people. The program emphasises mentorship and culturally safe practice, preparing graduates to work effectively within First Nations communities.

Making a difference

Students engage in impactful community-led research through Menzies School of Health Research, guided by expert mentors and focused on creating real-world outcomes for First Nations communities and the broader NT.

You'll contribute to groundbreaking research addressing health disparities, tropical diseases and innovative healthcare delivery models relevant to the NT context.



Learn in clinical simulation labs.

Financial support

The program offers scholarships and financial support, including help with accommodation and living expenses for students relocating to the NT. Rural and remote students may receive extra support to help them overcome geographical barriers.

How to apply

Visit satac.edu.au, search for

"medicine" and fill out the **CDU Menzies Medical Program Application Pack** by 10 October 2025. Submit your application by 30 September to access SATAC's early bird fee.

This is more than a medical degree. It's your chance to make a difference, stay connected to your community and become a healthcare leader with the knowledge, skills and cultural

understanding to drive positive change.

Your community needs doctors who understand it. This is your opportunity to answer that call.

To find out more or start your application, search "CDU Medicine" today.



Study medicine in the Northern Territory

The CDU Menzies Medical Program is a 5-year course leading to a Bachelor of Clinical Sciences Medicine / Doctor of Medicine degree. This degree is designed for students who are passionate about First Nations health, rural and remote medicine and community-led care.

- > 40 places available in 2026
- > Entry sub-quotas for NT residents, First Nations applicants and rural/remote students
- > Extensive clinical placements across the NT
- > Learn from respected First Nations leaders and leading local clinicians
- > Conduct impactful community-led research with expert mentors at Menzies School of Health Research

Applications close 10 October 2025



Scan here to learn more and apply



CRICOS Provider No. 00300K | RTO Provider No. 0373 | TEQSA Provider ID PRV12069



New scholarship program removing barriers for teachers



FOR the first Indigenous student enrolled in Australian Catholic University's All Points to Teaching (APTT) program, representation matters.

It's one of the reasons aspiring educator Krisharna Barrs, a proud Ywaalaraay woman, shifted her focus to teaching after completing a Bachelor of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences.

"I always carry my culture with me as a source of pride, and being the only Indigenous student in the program motivates me even more to succeed," she said.

"It's important to me to represent my community and help pave the way for future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers. Representation matters, and I hope my journey encourages others to follow."

Ms Barrs, 23, realised her passion was in teaching while in the final stages of her first degree and is planning to combine the two learning areas to foster lifelong healthy habits and a curiosity about the world in her students.

"I'm passionate about empowering young people through education and helping them see their own potential," she said.

ACU's innovative APTT program aims to increase participation of underrepresented groups in higher education and within the teaching profession, with a focus on First Nations and mature age students, those from regional, rural, and remote areas, and those with disabilities.

Year 12 graduates, career changers, and school support staff looking to upskill are also ideal candidates to undertake a fully funded Bachelor of Education (Secondary or Secondary and Special Education) or a Master of Teaching (Secondary) degree.

As part of the earn and learn APTT model, students receive intensive wraparound support while being paid to work in secondary schools across Queensland and New South Wales.

Students have access to ACU study support hubs located in Townsville, south-east Queensland, Rockhampton, Forbes/Bathurst, Parramatta,

Lake Macquarie, south-east New South Wales, Riverina and Tablelands.

The hubs operate in partnership with participating schools, the New South Wales and Queensland governments, several Catholic dioceses, and community organisations.

ACU APTT academic lead Dr Rebecca Pagano said the new industry-leading APTT pathway removed many of the financial, cultural, and geographic barriers students often faced when accessing higher education.

"The program offers a culturally responsive, place-based model that enables students to remain connected to Country, family, and community while studying," she said.

Ms Barrs said having teachers with an Indigenous background at the helm of classrooms was a powerful way to make connections and enrich learning environments.

She called on those thinking about a career as an educator to "go for it".

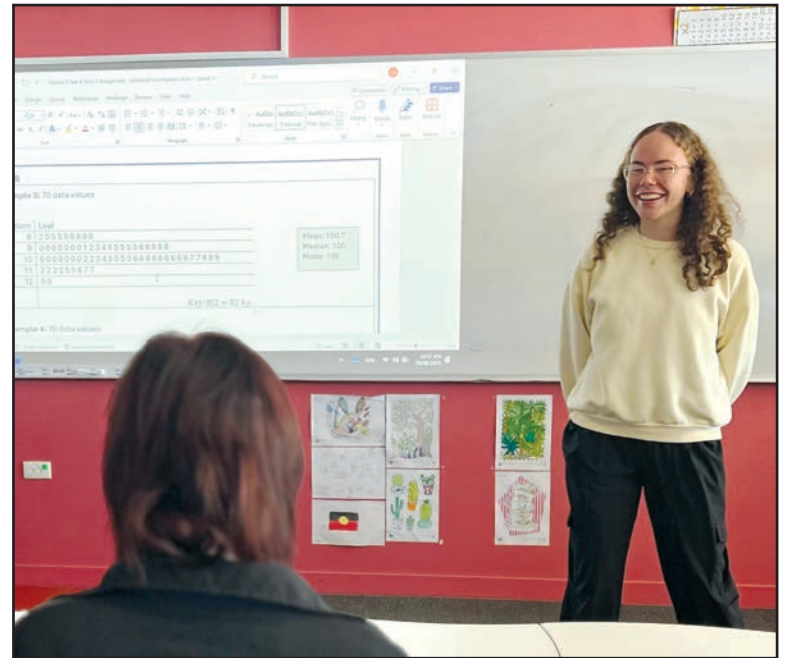
"Teaching is a powerful way to create change, inspire young people, and share our culture in a meaningful way. If you're even

considering it, take the leap – you never know whose life you might impact," she said.

"I would absolutely recommend the APTT program. It offers not only practical support but also a strong sense of community, and

it's a great pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to step into education with confidence."

The ACU APTT scholarship portal is open for the 2026 intake. Enquiries: APTT@acu.edu.au



Aspiring educator Krisharna Barrs, a proud Ywaalaraay woman.



Study a fully funded online degree

Work in a local school while studying to become a teacher. All Points to Teaching (APTT) is an exciting pathway for aspiring secondary school teachers. It offers a fully funded scholarship for an online degree – giving you the skills, experience and support to become a qualified teacher.

Find out more
acu.edu.au/aptt





Overcoming barriers to cervical screening for First Nations women: Southern Cross Uni to lead \$2.5m project



FOR most women, cervical screening can be an awkward but necessary test. Yet for First Nations women, additional

barriers, such as a lack of access to culturally safe care and stigma are leading to lower screening rates, putting them at a higher risk of developing cervical cancer.

Southern Cross University has been awarded \$2,498,994 over three-years from the federal government through Cancer Australia's Partnerships for Cancer Research grant program for the innovative project, SISTASCREEN (2024/PCR/2044742).

SISTASCREEN will codesign and implement strategies to increase uptake of opportunistic cervical screening during pregnancy and postpartum for First Nations women.

The project's chief investigator is Worimi woman Dr Marilyn Clarke from the Faculty of Health at the University's Coffs Harbour campus. Dr Clarke is an obstetrician and gynaecologist who has been working on Gumbayngirr country for the past 20 years.

"SISTASCREEN aims to increase cervical screening rates by offering the test during routine antenatal checkups," said Dr Clarke.

"Antenatal visits at their local Aboriginal community-controlled



SCU's, Dr Marilyn Clarke.

health service are an opportunistic time to engage First Nations women in cervical screening in a way which ensures culturally safety and empowerment."

Amongst First Nations women, there is a persistent disparity in the incidence and mortality of cervical cancer as well as in cervical screening rates.

"Engaging women early in positive cervical screening experiences and treatment pathways will set them up to engage in regular screening during their life course beyond the pregnancy. SISTASCREEN aims to ensure First Nations women are not left behind as Australia works towards the elimination of cervical cancer," said Dr Clarke.

"Engaging women early in positive cervical screening experiences and treatment pathways will set them up to

engage in regular screening during their life course beyond the pregnancy. SISTASCREEN aims to ensure First Nations women are not left behind as Australia works towards the elimination of cervical cancer."

Partnership with NACCHO

Southern Cross University will be partnering with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to create and deliver the project.

NACCHO CEO, Pat Turner AM, welcomed the partnership, saying: "For too long, our women have faced barriers to lifesaving screening and care, barriers rooted in systems that weren't designed for us, by us. The truth is, we cannot eliminate cervical cancer in Australia while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women continue to be left behind.

"SISTASCREEN is about more than closing a gap in statistics. It's about putting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women at the centre of solutions, embedding screening and care within our own health services, led by our own workforce, in a way that is culturally safe and empowering," said Ms Turner.

"This project gives us the chance to reach women at a critical moment in their lives, while they are pregnant and engaging with antenatal care, so that we can support their health and wellbeing, now and into the future.

NACCHO is proud to partner with Southern Cross University and our network of ACCHOs to drive this work forward. Together, we are building the evidence, the workforce, and the trust needed to ensure every woman has the care she deserves. Our women's health cannot wait, and neither can we."

Six 'early adopter' sites will be selected as SISTASCREEN partners. The first to come onboard is Bullinah Aboriginal Health Service at Ballina on the NSW North Coast. The project's goal is 50 sites nationally in three years' time.

"We'll work primarily with six early adopter sites. Once we've co-created and co-designed the resources, we then hope to then roll it out to 50 sites across the NACCHO network," said Dr Clarke.

"At the same time, we want to increase the capacity and skill level of the First Nations workforce.

"SISTASCREEN will build the capacity of health providers to have the confidence and knowledge to offer pregnant First Nations women a self-collected or clinician-collected cervical screening test."

SISTASCREEN complements two other projects led by Southern Cross University aiming to improve the health outcomes of Indigenous women: SISTABIRTH (culturally appropriate perinatal

model of care for mothers and their babies) and iSISTAQUIT (cessation of smoking/vaping).

Facts

Australia's First Nations women have more than twice the cervical cancer incidence (2.3 times) and a nearly four times (3.6 times) mortality rate than non-Indigenous women.

Increased risks are related to under-screening and late detection of pre-cancerous lesions, representing a system failure for Aboriginal women.

Cervical screening rates are lower for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women due to a combination of factors, including cultural barriers, lack of awareness, logistical challenges, and historical and systemic issues. Additional barriers include remoteness, socioeconomic disadvantage, and the need for culturally safe healthcare services.

In 2023, only 42.5% of eligible First Nations women had a cervical screening test within the previous five years.

Cancer Australia Partnerships for Cancer Research grant program

The Cancer Australia Partnerships for Cancer Research grant program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and the research sector to work together with community in delivering research activities that inform inclusive and equitable cancer care.



Southern Cross University

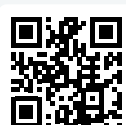
There has never been a better time to study

At Southern Cross University we understand that Indigenous knowledge is always current. Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples is committed to delivering culturally safe, dynamic and innovative courses, providing professional career pathways, and engaging in scholarship and research relevant to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We are one of the top universities in Australia for Indigenous students and offer undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the discipline of Indigenous Knowledge, Nursing and Midwifery, Education, Law, Business, Science, Engineering, Social Work and Psychology to name a few. This year 113 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will graduate across all faculties/colleges.

With full-time, part-time and pathway options, now is the perfect time to apply at Southern Cross University for 2026. You can study in bite-sized pieces and find the perfect balance between work, life and study.

Apply now to study in 2026:



CRICOS Provider: 01241G
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Bachelor of Indigenous Knowledge graduates Pearl Andrews, Anthony Hack and Keyarra Sweetwater-Delauney with Southern Cross University Chancellor Sandra McPhee AM and Gnibi Lecturer Dr Kylie Day



Open doors to research and opportunity in science



ABORIGINAL and Torres Strait Islander students are finding more ways to explore their curiosity for science at the University of Melbourne – with pathways, programs and internships to support their learning and future careers.

For Bachelor of Science (Extended) student Tiarna Kinces, those opportunities have already had a big impact.

"I chose to study at the University of Melbourne because of the flexibility and breadth of its courses," Tiarna said. "I first heard about the Bachelor of Science (Extended) from a high school careers adviser and it felt like the right pathway for me."

That pathway gave Tiarna the freedom to explore and ultimately find her passion. She began with an interest in engineering but soon realised psychology was where her curiosity lay. The Bachelor of Science (Extended), which lets students experience 28 subjects before committing to a specialisation, helped Tiarna find her stride while also introducing her to subjects she calls remarkable, including Geology of Southeast Australia and Australian Wildlife Biology.

Tiarna is now majoring in psychology

and recently completed a four-week research internship through the Faculty of Science's Indigenous Students in Science Research Internship (ISSRI) program. The program places undergraduate students in research labs across the University, allowing them to step into the role of a researcher. At the end of the program, students present their projects – developing both research and communication skills.

Ellen Tunumafono, Senior Coordinator of Indigenous STEM Outreach in the Faculty of Science, said ISSRI was created to help students see research as a real pathway.

"The program is important for students who may not have had access seeing what research can look like. It also helps widen participation by increasing the number of future First Nations researchers at the University of Melbourne," she said.

Her team supports students with a range of enrichment activities throughout the program, including coffee catch-ups, dinners with Indigenous academics, practice presentation sessions and bespoke support.

"Many students finish ISSRI more interested in research and more confident to pursue it," Ellen said.

For Tiarna, ISSRI meant joining the Functions of Emotion in Everyday Life (FEEL) lab, where she investigated the relationship between rumination, social sharing and emotional goals.

"My project explored whether the way we think about our feelings influences how we share them with others," she explained. "I conducted a literature review and designed a framework for future studies."

The experience has already shaped her next steps. "The internship was instrumental in helping me decide my future direction," Tiarna said. "I now plan to continue into Honours and other graduate programs after finishing my degree."

For many students, the Bachelor of Science (Extended) provides an important transition into university life. Unlike the Bachelor of Science, the first year offers smaller classes, mentoring and extra support before students join the larger cohort.

"Science is about curiosity, discovery and limitless possibilities," Tiarna said.

"Looking back, I'm incredibly grateful for the experiences and opportunities I've had at the University of Melbourne. Each one has opened new doors and helped shape my path."



Bachelor of Science (Extended) student, Tiarna Kinces.

Cultivate your career in STEM

Choose from over 40 majors in the Bachelor of Science, with dedicated pathways and support for Indigenous students to help you achieve your dream career. You'll find all of this at our Parkville campus on Wurundjeri Country.



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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Strong foundations for our children, strong futures for our communities



EVERY child should have the best start in life, and that begins with culturally safe, play-based early learning. The Centre of Excellence in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is a national leader in vocational education and training (VET), working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to build a stronger, more inclusive early childhood workforce.

Established through a joint initiative between the Australian and South Australian governments, and based at TAFE

SA, the Centre works nationally to respond to urgent workforce needs by delivering job-ready training that reflects the realities of early learning environments.

The Centre collaborates with stakeholders to co-design training that is culturally responsive, community-informed and aligned with sector priorities.

Current projects include:

- Translating early-childhood education concepts into Pitjantjatjara and embedding Anangu ways of learning for delivery across the APY Lands.
- Creating Autism-specific training to build educator capability in supporting autistic children and families. A pilot program is launching soon.

- Developing mentoring and leadership pathways to grow and retain educators.

To help people explore a career in early childhood, the Centre also offers a free online taster course, providing a practical introduction to working with young children and supporting communities.

Whether you are considering a career in early childhood or are an experienced educator already in the sector, the Centre of Excellence is committed to supporting your growth and strengthening outcomes for children, families and communities across Australia.

To learn more or to subscribe to their newsletter visit www.tafesa.edu.au/coe-ecec



ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT WORKING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Try our free, self-paced online 'taster' course to explore a rewarding career in early childhood education and care. Open to anyone, anywhere.

KICKSTART YOUR FUTURE: AN INTRODUCTION TO CAREERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN AUSTRALIA.

- > Explore different job roles in early childhood education.
- > See how you can support children, families and your community.
- > Discover what a typical day looks like.
- > Learn about different course options.
- > Developed by TAFE SA's Centre of Excellence in Early Childhood Education and Care.

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

Early Childhood Education and Care



Go to bit.ly/ececintro to start. Please share this with your networks.

tafeSA



Government of South Australia



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TAFE NSW celebrates trainee Aboriginal firefighters blazing their way through



NINETEEN Aboriginal future firefighters gathered today at TAFE NSW Meadowbank to celebrate completing the Indigenous Fire and Rescue Employment Strategy (IFARES) program. The fee-free initiative is delivered by TAFE NSW and Fire and Rescue NSW to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people pursuing careers in firefighting.

Since launching in 2014, IFARES has provided a pathway into employment for more than 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates, all of whom have gone on to serve as firefighters with Fire and Rescue NSW or ACT Fire and Rescue.

This year's cohort includes students from across New South Wales including Western Sydney, the South Coast, Central Coast, Hunter, Far West/Orana, and the North Coast.

Over a seven-month period, the IFARES participants completed a nationally recognised Certificate III in Fitness at TAFE NSW Meadowbank, delivered in a culturally safe and supportive learning environment. The program blends face-to-face teaching blocks with weekly online learning.

Alongside this formal training, participants take part in simulated emergency response scenarios,

career readiness workshops, and immersive activities that reflect the responsibilities and routines of professional firefighters. Each student is paired with a Fire and Rescue NSW Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander mentor, who provides guidance and support throughout the program.

Cultural safety is central to the success of IFARES, which is designed by Aboriginal staff from Fire and Rescue NSW and delivered in partnership with Aboriginal educators and mentors. It recognises the importance of connection to culture, community, and identity in creating strong learning outcomes and supporting long-term employment.

TAFE NSW Managing Director, Chloe Read said, "TAFE NSW is proud to continue our meaningful contribution to the highly successful Indigenous Fire and Rescue Employment Strategy initiative. So far we've supported 80 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people from across NSW to complete their qualification and begin rewarding careers as firefighters."

"The program provides career-focused, practical training for the students, as well as additional support and mentoring from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander emergency services officers already on the job."

"It's a terrific example of what can be achieved through genuine

partnership between agencies that are working towards Closing the Gap outcomes for further education and employment."

Fire and Rescue NSW Commissioner, Jeremy Fewtrell, said the IFARES program is helping to build a stronger and more inclusive fire service.

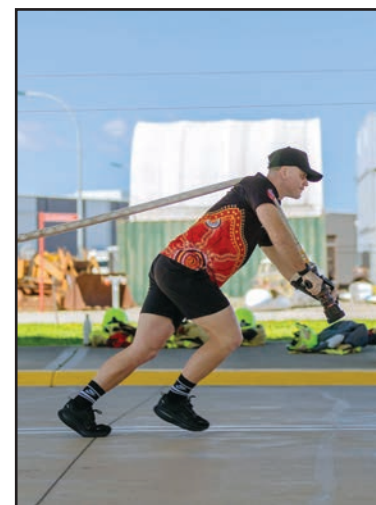
"Fire and Rescue NSW is committed to building a workforce that reflects the diverse communities we serve, and IFARES is an important part of that commitment," Commissioner Fewtrell said.

"This program provides participants with the skills, confidence and cultural support

they need to thrive as firefighters. We are proud to stand alongside this cohort as they take the next step towards a rewarding career protecting their communities."

The IFARES program is delivered fee-free and is supported through funding from Fire and Rescue NSW, TAFE NSW, the NSW Department of Education's Smart and Skilled program, and Services Australia's Away from Base initiative.

Applications for the next IFARES program will open on 26 September 2025. For more information visit careers.fire.nsw.gov.au and go to Indigenous Pathways.



Indigenous Fire and Rescue Employment Strategy Program (IFARES) recruits.



Contemporary composer Nick Wales and Arnhem Land ocean and waterway custodian Rrawun Maymuru. Photo Camila Tassino.

Song man and orchestra go deep to celebrate



ACCLAIMED Arnhem Land ocean and waterway custodian Rrawun Maymuru and contemporary composer Nick Wales will join forces with the Australian Brandenburg

Orchestra to premiere a new composition as part of concert series, *Water Music*, which explores the spiritual and cultural power of water.

Flowing seamlessly between past and present, the orchestra will perform Handel's *Water Music* masterpiece alongside the world premiere of Maymuru and Wales' work, *Water*.

The concert series will mark the first time the orchestra performs alongside a soloist in Yolŋu language, and will take place at the Melbourne Recital Centre from October 9-12 and Sydney's City Recital Hall from October 14-18.

The lead singer of Aboriginal rock band East Journey, Rrawun Maymuru, comes from a long line of Yolŋu song men from Yirrkala in North East Arnhem Land, and is the grandson of Dr Yunupingu, the original frontman of the iconic musical group Yothu Yindi.

Singing in both English and Yolŋu Mata, Maymuru's music reflects a deep connection to Country and culture, as well as his distinct perspective on the modern world.

"The Yolŋu people have been travelling and caring for the oceans and waterways for an eternity. We sing when the water is calm, when it's rough, clear or when it turns brackish," he said.

"We have names and songs for each of those elements and the creatures they contain. We know the boundaries of our waterways and those that belong to other clans.

"This work for Brandenburg comes from the Songline known as *Nguy Gapu* [the ocean].

"It is the right moment to perform this song for Brandenburg. It is an exciting point in the journey of sharing cultural knowledge. My collaboration with Nick Wales and the creation of this piece has arrived at the right time.

"Nick's ability to tune into the spirit of this

Songline and compose this classical composition feels like a cosmic connection – a blessing from my ancestral spirits. We look forward to sharing these stories with you."

Maymuru has previously collaborated with Wales on the songs *Yolŋu* and *Nyapillingu (Spirit Lady)*, blending ancestral Songlines with electronic and classical sound worlds.

Known for his immersive and progressive music, Wales's textural compositions traverse dance, film, theatre and visual art, with credits including *ab [intra]* for Sydney Dance Company, the feature film score for *True Spirit*, and collaborations with artists including Sarah Blasko, Ngaiire and Paul Mac.

In this genre-defying program, Artistic Director Paul Dyer explores the significance of water as an essential life force, inviting audiences to experience the convergence of ancient and contemporary musical traditions.

"My goal was to craft a program that speaks across time and cultures, uniting Baroque music with First Nations voices to illuminate the enduring presence of water in music, culture and life," he said.

"At its heart is Handel's exuberant *Water Music*, a celebration of abundance and grandeur, alongside the newly commissioned *Water* by Maymuru and Wales.

"Seasoned collaborators, Wales and Maymuru's new orchestral work is a powerful ode to water that bridges Songlines of Arnhem Land with modern instruments.

"Rrawun will perform the piece in Yolŋu language live on stage with the Brandenburg, marking his first performance with an orchestra."

The program also features *Harbour Light*, a previous composition by Nick Wales inspired by the shifting moods of Sydney Harbour, and the work *Cloud Beneath the Sea* by acclaimed Australian pianist and ARIA Award-winning composer Sophie Hutchings.

More information and tickets go to: www.brandenburg.com.au

Exhibition celebrates the power of Barba women

By CHRISTIAN MORROW



AN exhibition by acclaimed Aboriginal artist Bibi Barba, *The Evolution of the Barba Women and Desert Flower – Polish Factor!*, will be on display on the Reconciliation Wall of the NSW Parliament House until October 30, 2025.

With an artistic career spanning more than 40 years, Bibi is a proud saltwater woman of Darumbal, Darkinjung, Cammeraygal, Gadigal and Yuin heritage.

She gained international recognition for her distinctive Desert Flowers motif – abstract, flowing petals inspired by the stories of her grandmother.

The reference to "Polish Factor" in the exhibition title refers to a significant chapter in Bibi's journey, when she discovered her Desert Flowers had been replicated without permission throughout a hotel in Poland.

Bibi's legal battle to reclaim authorship and rights has been captured in the documentary *Stolen in Poland*, due for completion and release in 2026.

The documentary will bring global attention to the misappropriation of Aboriginal art and highlighted the need for stronger protection of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property.

Bibi Barba said she was thrilled to be exhibiting at the parliament of New South Wales.

"This exhibition celebrates the resilience of the Barba women. My Desert Flowers carry our stories forward while reminding us of the importance of protecting Aboriginal culture and creativity.

Bibi's ongoing campaign has also placed her on the frontline of a broader campaign to protect Indigenous culture and knowledge from being plundered by AI applications.

Following a drawn-out process, lasting five years, dealing with both the Australian ambassador to Poland and also the Polish ambassador in Australia, Ms Barba realised that under the Bern Convention for the protection of Literary and Artistic Works she may have an avenue to get justice and acknowledgement from the Polish designer who appropriated her work in the first place.

"I've always been the creator of the art piece under the Bern Convention, to which the Polish government is also a signatory.

"I can pursue them under article 16 of the convention because without clear and

prominent attribution to me as the original author of the work the unauthorised use of my work represents a clear and fundamental breach of my rights," she said.

But for Ms Barba, the case is not just about financial recompense, she also wants an apology for the "violation of the right to integrity flowing from the reproduction of my culturally significant work."

"Time limitations on my claim don't apply because the protection of my intellectual rights under Polish law is perpetual so therefore I have the right to an apology from the Polish designer."

Ms Barber sees her campaign for acknowledgement having implications in the case of big tech companies harvesting data, images and cultural knowledge, un-attributed and free of charge, from across the internet for use in their burgeoning AI applications

She is part of an Australian Government's Office of the Arts First Nations expert working group tasked with informing standalone legislation to protect First Nations traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

"This is where it's going to get interesting – there is a possibility of geo-tagging our physical works so as to secure their provenance."

"This is the conversation we need to have with those tech billionaires who are creating AI platforms, augmented reality and meta verses using our cultural knowledge.

"I hope to have this all tied up by the time *Stolen in Poland* is completed so the world can see the crusade I am on. I've gotta get this done. It's unfinished business."

Ms Barba sees the exhibition at State Parliament as a step along the way in the process of asserting her creative rights.

"This Polish episode has really affected my work, it's helped me create more beautiful pieces and bring the Barba woman to light as that desert flower."

Ben Franklin MLC, President of the NSW Legislative Council, said Ms Barba's work was powerful and profound.

"We are honoured to host her exhibition at NSW Parliament – It's a celebration of culture and a reminder of the need to protect Indigenous art."

The Evolution of the Barba Women and Desert Flower – Polish Factor! is on at the Parliament of New South Wales until October 30. Entry is free.



Bibi Barba's distinctive work on show at Parliament House NSW.