

Finding confidence, community and a place in law



FOR Kamilaroi and Maltese woman Taylor Fitzgerald, stepping into a university classroom was once

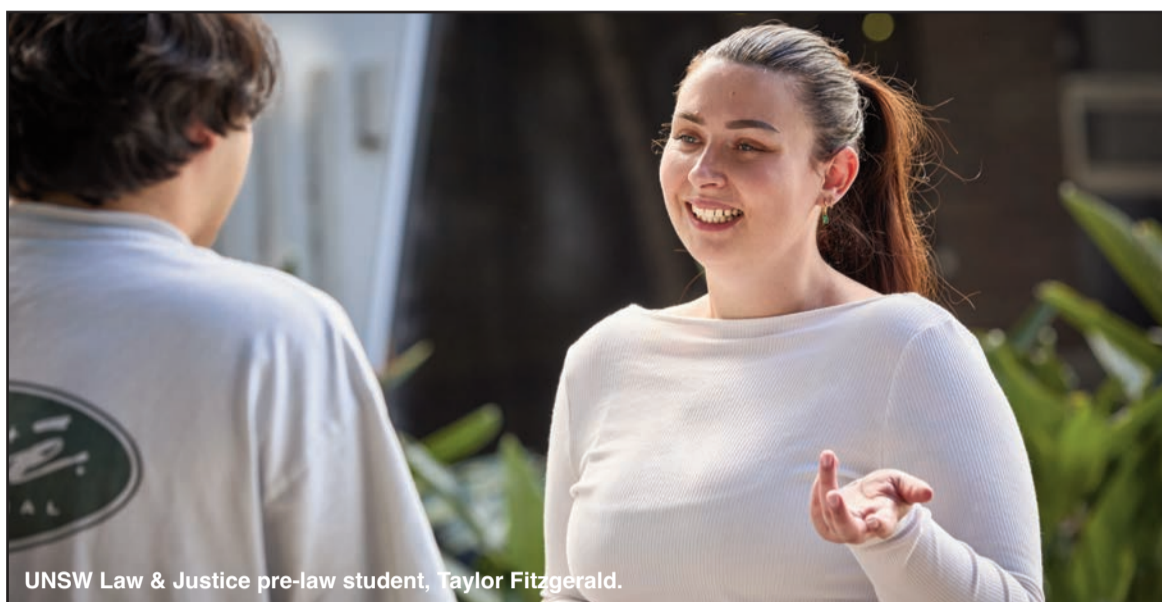
unimaginable. Raised on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country, she is now preparing to commence a double degree in Law and Social Sciences at UNSW Sydney after completing the UNSW Indigenous Pre-Law Program as a scholarship recipient. Her path to law has been shaped by lived experience, resilience and a strong commitment to advocating for her community.

"I spent many years in survival mode," Taylor says. "Because of my life circumstances, I never thought doing a law degree was an option."

Now 27, Taylor is one of the recipients of the UNSW Law & Justice Indigenous Pre-Law Scholarship, a program designed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in legal administrative and field officer roles students who are considering a future in law.

Taylor grew up knowing she wanted to make change, particularly in policy and law. Working full-time and supporting herself financially, she had long set aside further study to prioritise stability.

"I've always been staunch in the way that I think, and I'm often the first to advocate for my people," she says. "I really believe lived experience is crucial



UNSW Law & Justice pre-law student, Taylor Fitzgerald.

when it comes to driving change."

The Pre-Law Scholarship enabled Taylor to attend the intensive three-week pre-law program, giving her the opportunity to take leave from work and focus fully on study without the usual financial pressure. It also gave her the space to rebuild her confidence after time away from formal education.

"That support made a huge difference," Taylor explains. "Taking time off work when you pay rent and look after family is stressful. The scholarship really offloaded that stress so I could focus on learning and being present."

"It allowed me to step into a university and realise that I

belonged there," she says. "Not only did they want to see me succeed, they wanted me there. That was really powerful."

Already working in the legal sector as an Aboriginal Field Officer, Taylor had been exposed to law through community engagement and advocacy. The pre-law program deepened her understanding of what studying law would involve and reinforced her belief that she could succeed.

"It gave me the guidance and confidence to pursue this properly," she says. "Now I'm genuinely excited to start my law degree and I can see myself being successful in this space."

A standout aspect of the program for Taylor was the strong sense of community fostered

among participants.

"Being in a space with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from different places and backgrounds was really special," she says. "We could think freely, feel safe and learn together."

She describes the experience contrasted the isolation that can sometimes exist in educational spaces, particularly in law, helping participants build networks and connections that will carry through into their degrees.

"When you know your people are there, you stay" Taylor says. That sense of community is powerful."

Taylor is now encouraging others working in legal

administration, community roles and field officer positions to consider studying law, even if it feels intimidating.

"It is scary and it does take courage," she says. "But we have survived so much as a community. That resilience is already there."

She believes programs like pre-law are critical in opening doors and creating pathways into the profession.

"They give you a chance to make mistakes, ask questions and grow," Taylor says. "We deserve to be in law and at university. We've already survived and are so resilient, so why not keep pushing forward?"

Reflecting on the impact of the scholarship, Taylor says it has reshaped how she sees herself and her future.

"It's given me the courage and confidence to see myself making change in law," she says. "I always felt I might end up here one day. Now I know I can truly succeed on this journey."

The 2026 Indigenous Pre-Law program runs from 16 November to 4 December 2026, with applications opening soon.

To register your interest for the Indigenous Pre-Law Program, or to find out more about the scholarship for legal administrative workers and field officers, please reach out to Charmaine Mumbulla, Director of Indigenous Legal Education at c.mumbulla@unsw.edu.au

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