

Professional capability and cultural insight



MURAWARI man Aiden Pearson accepted a Pat Turner Scholarship in 2023, backing himself to further his career and make a bigger contribution.

“For me, undertaking a masters was about investing in myself and building the skills I knew I’d need to grow in the Australian Public Service (APS),” Aiden says.

Aiden’s former employer, Department of Finance, supported him to study full-time for two years to complete a Master of Project Management at The Australian National University (ANU).

“I wanted to move beyond just doing the work, to really understanding how to lead it – how to think strategically, manage complexity, deliver better outcomes and contribute more effectively to policy and program delivery, particularly in complex and high-impact areas.”

As part of his studies, Aiden undertook a research project to explore Indigenous economic empowerment. He mapped the financial mechanisms, policies, and governance structures that shape Indigenous economic empowerment, identifying critical gaps and proposing strategic reforms.

Aiden’s research provided the Department of Finance with options to enhance Indigenous economic resilience, self-determination and long-term



Aiden Pearson. Picture: Adam McGrath/HCreations.

financial sustainability.

Aiden says learning alongside other Indigenous public servants created a sense of community and a supportive learning environment, which made a huge difference while he was studying.

“We could share experiences and apply what we were learning directly to real workplace challenges. It didn’t feel like study in isolation; it felt connected to real work and real impact and elevated my overall experience.”

Aiden is now applying his studies in a new role at National Emergency Management Agency, where he is working to support Indigenous communities impacted and displaced from Country by natural disasters.

Aiden says the Pat Turner Scholarship Program brings something really unique to the Australian Public Service.

“It’s not just about building qualifications – it’s about building capability, confidence, and connection.”

“Graduates of the program are now working across the APS, contributing their expertise while also bringing lived experience to the development of policies and programs – including those that directly impact First Nations people.

“This combination of professional capability and cultural insight is incredibly powerful.”

The Pat Turner Scholarship is a one-to-three year, full-pay scholarship for any level of postgraduate study at ANU or Charles Darwin University for high performing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander APS 4 to SES Band 1 Australian public servants or eligible PGPA entity employees.

Find out more at srwfoundation.anu.edu.au



Dr Pat Turner AM



Australian National University

Sir Roland Wilson Foundation

Pat Turner Scholarships

Full-pay scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian Public Servants and eligible PGPA entity employees to do full-time postgraduate study or research at The Australian National University or Charles Darwin University.

Our scholarships develop research, analytical and leadership skills, and support scholars to study topics of national significance and strategic importance to the Australian Public Service.

Find out more at srwfoundation.anu.edu.au or email srw.foundation@anu.edu.au