

# mid-year higher education 2023

YOUR GUIDE TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HIGHER EDUCATION



‘The ongoing support and understanding of lecturers and staff helped me get my head around a very new world.’

Western Sydney University student Brooke Toli. Photo credit: Sally Tsoutas.

## Pathway ignites passion for Midwifery at WSU

A proud Buruberongal and Wumali woman of the Darug nation, Brooke Toli ignited her passion for bettering healthcare for Aboriginal mothers giving birth while completing a Bachelor of Midwifery at Western Sydney University.

The soon-to-be mother of four from Sydney's west is now undertaking postgraduate studies in Diabetes Care and Education and said being part of the birthing process is indescribable and alongside her children, inspires her each and every day.

“The opportunities Western Sydney University provided me included a clinical placement which was 50 per cent of my degree, access to state-of-the-art hospital room technology, and a global placement allowing me to explore a clinical

workplace outside the hospital,” said Brooke.

“This experience is something I will never forget; it opened my eyes to what needs to change in the healthcare system to benefit my people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait people.

“This showed me there is more to the clinical textbooks that cannot be taught but needs to be experienced. Through all my placements, the University encouraged, supported and allowed me to uncover who I am as an Aboriginal woman.”

As a mature student, Brooke found studying for the first time since high school a challenge but flourished through the support and encouragement offered by the University.

“The ongoing support and understanding of lecturers and

staff helped me get my head around a very new world. The services available such as MESH (Mathematics Education Support Hub), PCALs (Professional Communication Academic Literacy Support, specific to Nursing and Midwifery), and PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions) to name a few, really helped with my results,” she said.

### Facilities

“The facilities available to students always seemed above and beyond. Facilities such as the Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education – an Indigenous learning space – that not only provided services such as a computer lab and photocopying, but gave us a safe space to study, connect and get support from the success

officers placed in each of them.”

As part of sitting an entry assessment through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathway Program in 2017, Brooke had the opportunity to refresh her literature and mathematics skills, growing both her confidence and network.

“Not only did the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathway Program allow for me to meet other Indigenous people that were looking to study the same as me or an alternative pathway, but it also helped me to connect with other non-school leavers which was great, because we were able to support each other,” she said.

“The staff that facilitated these testings were staff working at Western at the time and were generally working in the

Badanami space. So being able to meet them, get to know them and have them as a familiar face and connect assisted with those transitions into Uni life.”

Brooke highly recommends the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathway Program to all Mob and hopes to inspire her children through her determination and achievements.

“Whether you are a high school leaver or non-school leaver, the program is a steppingstone to our well-deserved success that we are all entitled to.”

“I stay positive by looking at my children. At the end of the day, they were my driving force to finish my degree and continue to study. Paving them a path to follow and showing them that university is achievable for all.”