

# Summer School, early start

By GRACE ANDREWS

In 2022 I applied to the early offer program at James Cook University to study a Bachelor of Biomedical Sciences. When doing so, Auntie Karen from the Indigenous Education and Research Centre contacted me to talk to me about my tertiary study options and have a yarn about a program called Summer School. Summer school was a pre-program for prospective Indigenous school leavers who were applying or thinking about applying to JCU for their tertiary studies. Auntie Karen told me it would be a really good idea to apply for the program and come spend a week at JCU to see what university would be like. A few weeks later, after applying, I got an email informing me that I was one of the 24 year 12 students invited to JCU for the program. I was so excited to see Townsville and the university, but also a little sad cause I was missing the First & Forever, first nations musical festival – I really wanted to see Barkaa.

I was born and lived all the way down south, in Deniliquin NSW, Koori Country. So it was quite the hike, after a 3 hour drive and a 3 hour plane, I had finally arrived in Townsville. We were all being housed at Saints Residential collage, which was one of the collages on campus. We started by meeting

everyone, both from the IERC and the other students who had come from all over Queensland.

During the week we focused on four main areas of study Math, English, Chemistry and tertiary study skills. All programs and classes were run by the IERC staff and academic lectures, with the help of a number of indigenous student ambassadors. The ambassadors were amazing, because they were already students at JCU it was really good to yarn with them and learn more about their experiences at university. They gave the best advice and directed a lot of us in the right direction, informing us about their own study course. All the academic lectures and team building activities helped me build a basic knowledge and the skills to commence my own university studies in 2023 and gave me the opportunity to experience what university life was like as a whole.

Choosing JCU Townsville was a really big and definitely life changing decision for myself, I would be moving 23 hours (drive) away from my family and home. Summer school really solidified my decision and helped me grow confidence in my ability to move away from home and live and study on my own. Meeting and becoming close with everybody who works in the Indigenous Education & Research centre made me feel so comfortable and safe within the space. The students and

staff have become like family, and I wouldn't be on this journey without their continued support and warm experiences I had at summer school.

I have a distinct memory of when I first arrived in Townsville this year after driving my little MG3, with my whole life packed into it, all the way up here. I walked into the centre and Emma (IERC staff member) came running out to greet my dad and me. I was so overwhelmed with emotions and nervous to be there, I broke down into tears hugging her, she squeezed me, and I just knew in that moment, that these people where my family and they would always look after me.

I am now in my second semester of my first year of the Bachelor of Biomedical Sciences and absolutely loving my journey so far. I live on campus at the new Buralga Yumba accommodation building right next to the IERC. I have also been able to contribute to the establishment of Bebegu Yumba Wadja Bimbi, the Townsville Indigenous Student Association, helping to organise and promote social and cultural events for our Indigenous student cohort. I receive so much love and support no matter what and know that without the summer school program I never would have met the IREC staff or any other students and made the valuable relationships I cherish and admire so much today.



Grace Andrews



Are you planning to study in 2024?

Then our intensive preparatory program is open to you! This is the perfect opportunity for you to build basic knowledge and skills to commence university studies next year!

The IERC covers all costs associated with the program, including travel to and from Townsville, accommodation and catering costs for all participants.

**JCU Summer School - Monday 27th to Friday 1st December 2023**  
Bebegu Yumba campus, Townsville, James Cook University

