

Matt Jarrett – pursuing social justice

Matt Jarrett's journey through UNSW is nothing short of inspiring. As a Dunghutti man with a deep passion for social justice, Matt's path from the Indigenous Pre-Law Program to being a high achieving and Award-winning student near the end of his degree shows how a university education can change lives and communities.

With a knack for understanding people and their stories, Matt saw the law as a way to create real change. **"As a proud Dunghutti fella, I made a conscious decision to study at UNSW because I am passionate about social justice and creating opportunities for better outcomes for First Nations peoples. UNSW has a great reputation for being proactive on social issues and reflecting those values in the courses offered."** says Matt. It was this alignment with his values that fuelled his drive through law school.

Matt's journey to study law wasn't linear. With ambitions to work in policy, Matt commenced his studies at university as a mature age student through the University Preparation Program. This experience made him aware of the Indigenous Preparatory Programs available at UNSW Sydney and sparked his interest in combining his passion for policy change with studies in law.

"During this 3-week intensive program in December 2019, my love of the law was born. I could see that studying law, social research, and policy would give me an understanding of the entire process of change-making. From identifying an area of social deficit, along with the influences and actors that make it so, all the way to affecting substantive change through legislative reform."

UNSW's Indigenous Pre-Law Program is more than just an introduction to university. It's an intensive experience designed to prepare students for the challenges of higher education while providing a strong foundation in law. The

program provides an alternative entry pathway to many UNSW degrees and allows students to connect with the community before your first year.

Alongside his studies, Matt worked as a Legal Research Assistant and then Paralegal at the corporate law firm Gilbert + Tobin, a career direction that initially took him by surprise. However, the relationship between UNSW and Gilbert + Tobin opened his eye to how many ways a law degree can make change.

"Like UNSW, Gilbert + Tobin played a very important role in supporting the process that led to the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Corporate firms wield substantial influence. When that influence is put to work for a social cause, the impact is undeniably felt."

Today, Matt reflects that one of his most meaningful experiences while at UNSW has been the opportunity to give back to the programs that impacted his journey. In 2020 and 2021, Matt participated in the Indigenous Pre-Law program as a tutor and mentor to First Nations students.

"I have an enormity of gratitude for both the University Preparation Program (UPP) and Pre-Law programs. Knowing how significant the Pre-Law program was to my current trajectory made the experience of contributing to other First Nations students' journeys in such a way extremely rewarding," he says.

Matt hopes to continue using his degree to positively impact First Nations people wherever he ends up applying his studies.

"I want to see First Nations peoples and communities thrive as much as possible. If I can positively influence the way First Nations peoples and the broader Australian community relate to each other on a large scale through policy work, fantastic.

If I get to advocate for people who need a voice in the

courts, fantastic. If I help just one person get off an unjust criminal charge or punitive fine that would impose undue hardship, fantastic. The options are ample, and all are worthwhile."

For more information on UNSW's Indigenous Pre-Law Program, scan the QR code below. If you would like to have a yarn with the Nura Gili Centre for Indigenous Programs about your study options and entry pathways, email nuragili@unsw.edu.au



Matt Jarrett



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