

Leroy discovers his dreams

Growing up in Kempsey, proud Kamilaroi man Leroy Fernando helped his parents make ends meet, working before and after school at his father's Indigenous sportswear company and with his mother at her cleaning job.

The idea that he might one day attend university seemed far-fetched.

"I didn't really have any aspirations. I didn't think I'd get anywhere," said Fernando, now 23.

But everything changed when he travelled to Sydney and Melbourne to attend programs run by universities for Indigenous high-school students, designed to open pathways to higher education. From the moment he got on the plane to Sydney – his first ever flight – his world began to expand.

"I didn't think I would amount to much or exceed in many areas until I went to a few programs universities provided for Indigenous students. It gave me the kind of encouragement I never got anywhere else," he said.

He became determined to reach the University of Sydney via the Gadigal Program, which allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to apply



Leroy Fernando, proud Kamilaroi man, Bachelor of Arts, majoring in International Relations and Socio-Legal Studies, and Gadigal Program student

for an early conditional offer, with applications assessed on factors beyond academic achievements, such as personal interests, motivations and goals. Through the program, students can access lower minimum ATAR requirements for admission, a two-week academic skills program before commencement and ongoing

academic and personal support.

In 2018 Fernando was accepted into the University and began studying for a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in International Relations and Socio-Legal Studies.

He moved to Sydney to begin his degree with an accommodation scholarship from the University, ensuring he

could focus on his studies without worrying about how to pay rent.

"I wouldn't have gone far at all without the support from the University of Sydney," he said.

An arts degree proved the perfect environment to discover his interests and hone his aspirations.

"I fell in love with international

politics," he said.

"I kind of fell in love with policy and the way social policy and domestic policy can change lives. I've set my mind to working in policy and making lives better."

Back in Kempsey, Fernando's community looks up to him, and he takes his position as a role model seriously.

He has received awards for community engagement and support for his service in Indigenous communities through the University of Sydney's student support services.

"For me, university cemented these kinds of dreams – that I can accomplish things, or I can help people. Right now, it's about taking that next step to turn those dreams into a reality," he said.

He hopes to start a Juris Doctor, a graduate-entry professional law degree, at the University of Sydney next year as he looks forward to a future making change and finding solutions to help Indigenous communities.

● For more information about studying at the University, as well as scholarships and support, visit sydney.edu.au/indigenous

One Sydney, many people

Discover our range of programs dedicated to supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who dream of studying here.

Your path to Sydney

Apply now for the Gadigal Program. You will access a lower minimum ATAR for admission, an academic skills program to set you up for success and ongoing academic and personal support.

We've also introduced a pathway to study some of our humanities, science and health degrees. The Extended Bachelor's Programs provide an additional foundation year of study in an academically and culturally supported environment.

Student support and scholarships

Join an inclusive network ready to support you in high school, during uni and as you begin your career. We also offer a wide range of study, travel and accommodation scholarships.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Leadership is open to all. Start your journey. sydney.edu.au/indigenous-support

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