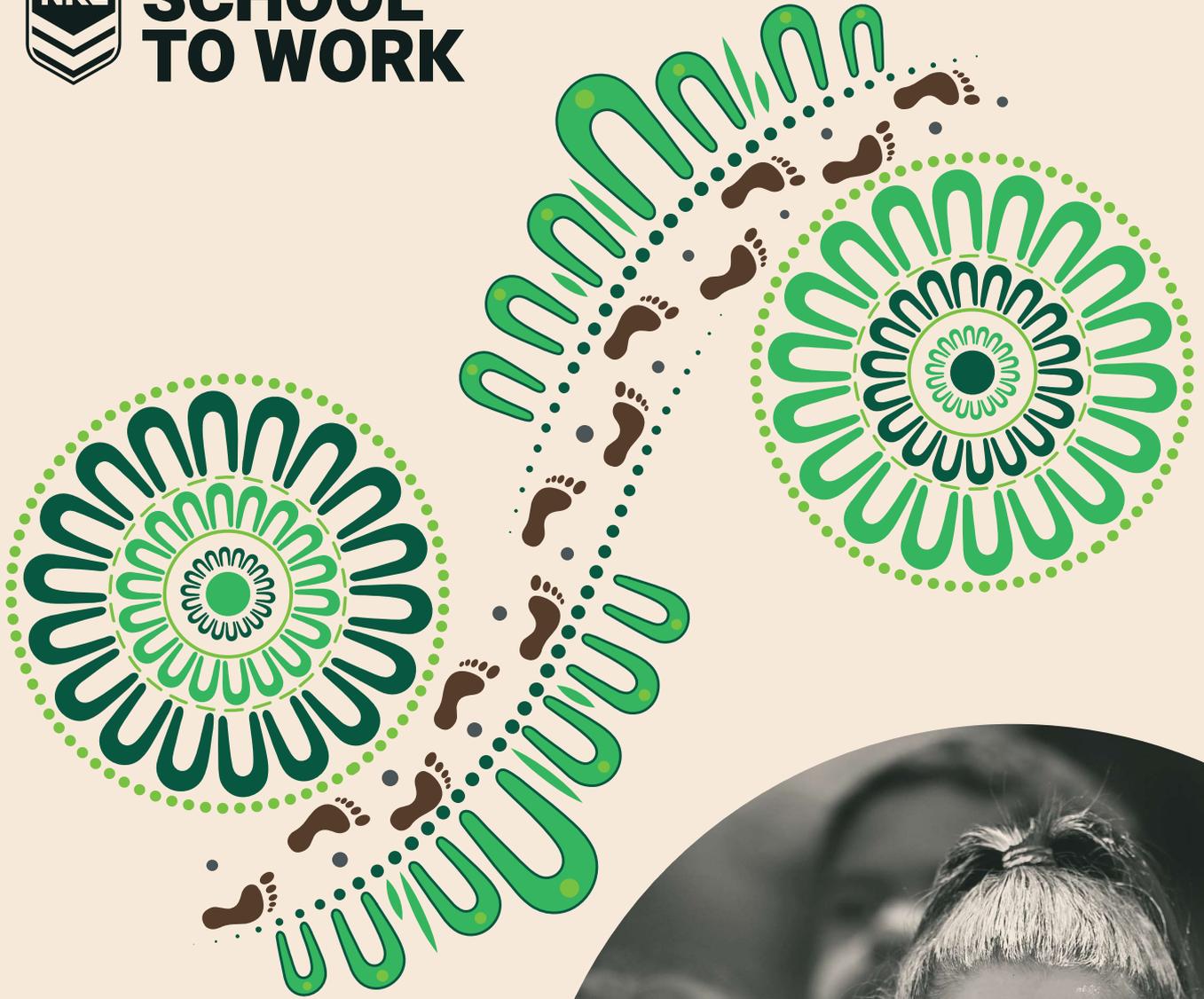




# SCHOOL TO WORK



# S2W

**NRL SCHOOL TO WORK (S2W) IS AN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM THAT HAS LEVERAGED THE PROFILE OF RUGBY LEAGUE, AND ITS UNIQUE AND SPECIAL POSITION IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, TO SUPPORT YOUNG INDIGENOUS STUDENTS TO COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL AND SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITION INTO FURTHER EDUCATION OR EMPLOYMENT SINCE 2012.**

2012 – 2024



140 HIGH SCHOOLS



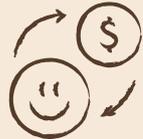
5,000+ STUDENTS SUPPORTED SINCE 2012



4,000 PARTICIPANTS SUPPORTED INTO PATHWAYS



2024 S2W PARTICIPANT YEAR 12 ATTAINMENT RATE OF 93%, COMPARED TO 2021 NATIONAL INDIGENOUS COHORT RATE OF 68%



\$4.70 SOCIAL RETURN ON EVERY \$1 OF GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT

**LONG-TERM GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT CAN PROVIDE CERTAINTY FOR ONGOING PROGRAM OPERATION AND DELIVERY, AND EXPANSION INTO REGIONAL AREAS.**

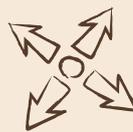
2025-2028 EXPANSION: 5,000 PARTICIPANTS



3,000 YEAR 11 AND 12 STUDENTS



2,000 POST-SECONDARY PARTICIPANTS



EXPAND INTO REGIONAL AREAS



NEW INITIATIVES

**THE NRL IS DIVERSIFYING FUNDING BY SECURING PRIVATE, CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT TO FORCE MULTIPLY GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND ENHANCE OUTCOMES IN FURTHER PURSUIT OF CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS. AN NRL CHARITY IS BEING ESTABLISHED TO FACILITATE PHILANTHROPIC DONATIONS INTO PROGRAMS, INCLUDING S2W.**



S2W was designed in collaboration with government to address the significant disparity in secondary school completion rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, aligned with *Closing the Gap* targets and with an emphasis on self-determination.

S2W provides participants with work experience, cultural connections and mentoring and leadership opportunities that lead to successful community outcomes.



WE PREPARE PARTICIPANTS FOR TRANSITION, CONNECT THEM TO CULTURE, AND PROVIDE ACCESS AND EXPOSURE TO EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In genuine partnership with Indigenous communities and their self-determination aspirations, and created with government as aligned with their priorities, S2W:

Improves whole of life education outcomes and wellbeing for Indigenous youth and communities.

Supports the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) to implement *Closing the Gap* targets in increasing educational attainment and enhancing employment prospects for Indigenous youth.

Increases the long-term financial independence and stability of Indigenous youth, breaking cycles of unemployment and disadvantage.



**S2W has been developed to align with the priorities of the NIAA's Indigenous Advancement Strategy, specifically:**

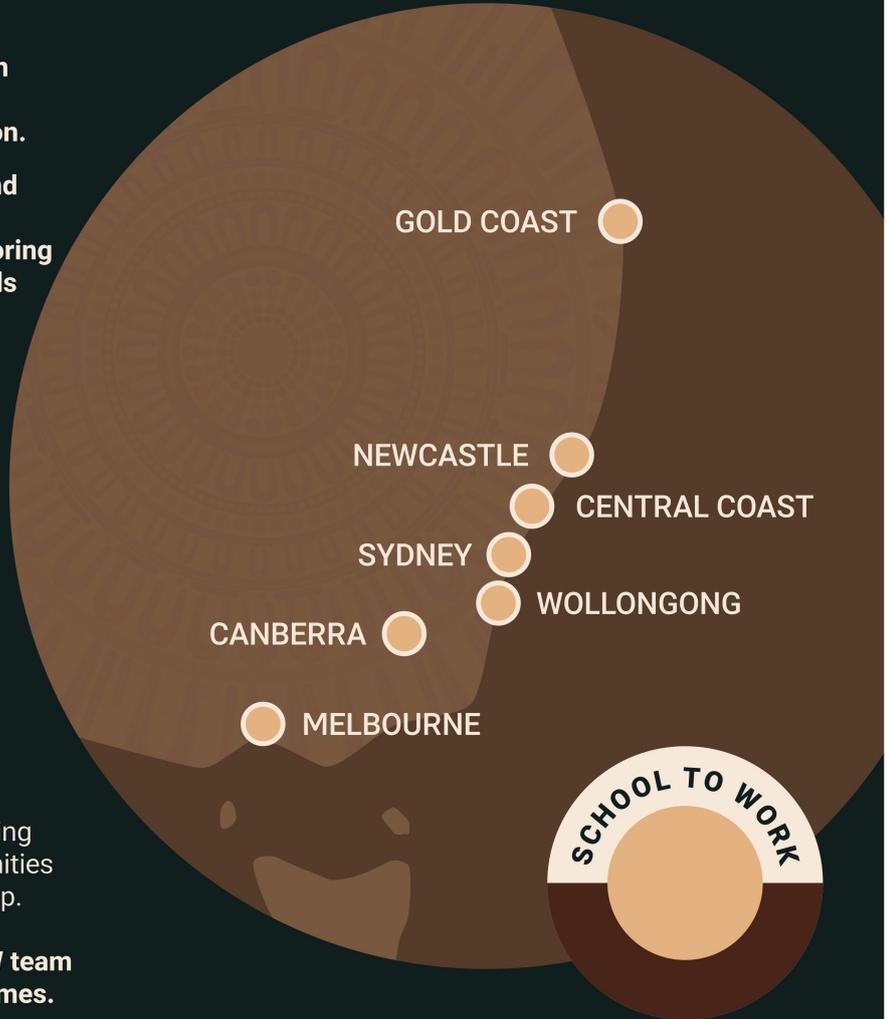
Jobs, Land and Economy – Promoting jobs and economic opportunities for First Nations Australians and their families, entities and communities, and assist them gain rights and interests in, or derive economic or social benefits from the use of land and sea.

# PROGRAM DELIVERY

S2W is delivered in areas of socio-economic disadvantage across the Gold Coast, Newcastle, Central Coast, Sydney, Wollongong, Canberra and Melbourne areas.

140 schools are involved with the program in 11 NRL catchment areas, evolving from four Western Sydney NRL clubs since its inception.

S2W supports students in their education and employment transitions from year 11 until 12-months post-school, with ongoing mentoring guidance. Full participant timeline and details of key initiatives are available on page 12.



20 staff are employed by the program, including 13 project officers who work in their communities to provide meaningful support and mentorship.

**Project officers are seen as role models to students and the guidance of our entire S2W team has been crucial to achieving positive outcomes.**



NRL staff, clubs and players are supported by an exceptional team of community members, government, and corporate sponsors.

# OUTCOMES

An independent review of the NRL's social impact programs found that in 2023 S2W achieved a \$4.70 social return on investment for every \$1 of government support.

## Year 12 attainment rate

National Indigenous students



in 2021

National non-Indigenous students



in 2021

S2W participants



in 2024



## Participants supported by S2W program 2020 – 2024 year-to-date



Year 11 students

(Up 385 from goal of 1,575)



Year 12 students

(Up 385 from goal of 1,575)



Participants supported in commencing post-secondary education

(Up 22 from goal of 410)



Participants supported in commencing post-secondary employment

(98% of 556 goal)

While we have achieved exceptional results with our completion rates and participation, S2W recruitment and participation has been impeded by the operation of one-year variations rather than the security of a long-term contract. Our expansion goal for 2025-28 is achievable through secured long-term funding.

# 2025-28 EXPANSION

Our goal for 2025 to 2028 is to expand S2W to further support *Closing the Gap* targets.

The NRL recognises that addressing a gap disparity takes focused and sustained commitment in a collaborative approach between us, government, and Indigenous communities.



**S2W'S FOCUS ON PROVIDING WORK EXPERIENCE AND MENTORING SUPPORTS BRIDGING THE GAP IN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, CONTRIBUTING TO THE TARGET OF HALVING THE GAP IN EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES BY 2031.**

- Proposed program expansion would see an **increase in participant numbers to 3,000** (1,000 students per year over the first three years) and post-secondary participants to 2,000).

- By progressively increasing year 12 completion rates, S2W directly supports the target of boosting the proportion of Indigenous youth engaged in employment, education, or training.

- Investment in the program, particularly by expanding into outer regional areas in QLD, VIC and Northern NSW, will ensure it continues to yield significant positive outcomes for Indigenous students:

- Year 12 attainment rates for Indigenous students vary across the country with lower rates in outer regional areas, remote areas and very remote areas.

- S2W significantly outperforms the national average in terms of Indigenous school completion rates.

- We will employ 11 new project officers to support program expansion, with a focus on much-needed regional support.



## NEW INITIATIVES

- Additional scholarships
- Drivers' licence attainment program
- Connect with life-skills learning providers
  - Technology exchange program
- Provide necessary job-specific workwear
  - Increased internship opportunities
- Obtain job-ready qualifications and certificates
  - Student tutoring

# CASE STUDIES

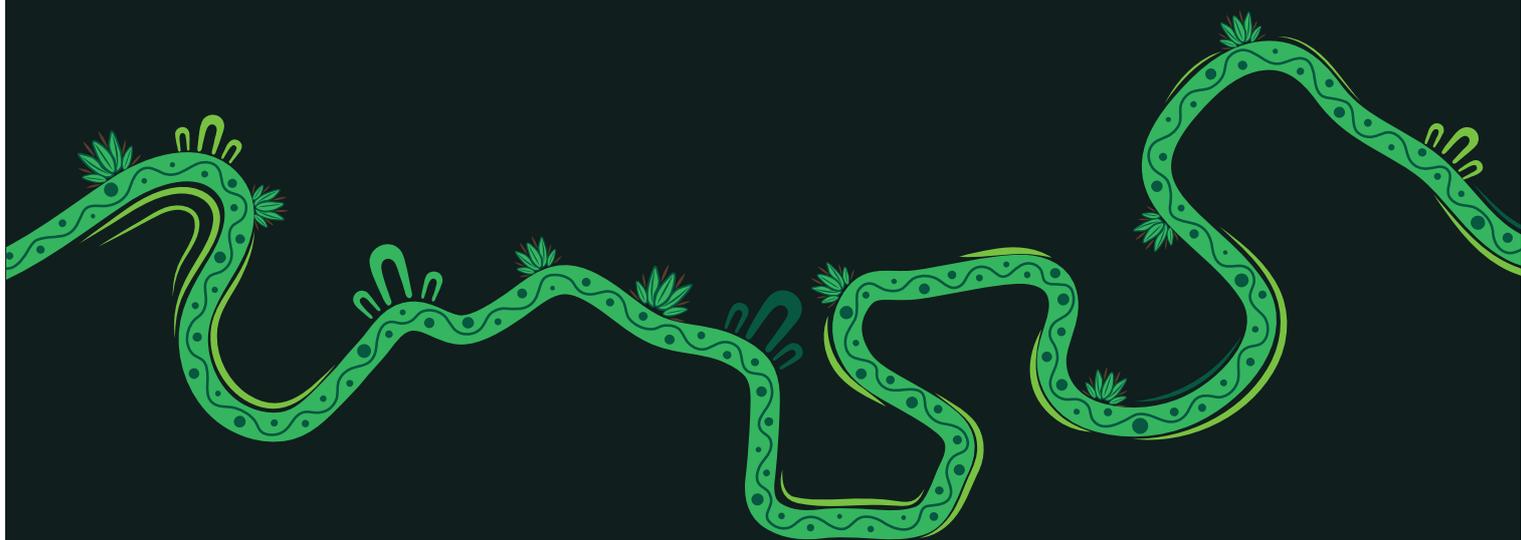
## Zoe's Complex Case

Zoe, a S2W project officer, has worked with a student who faced homelessness, supporting them to graduate year 12. The student's homelife was impacted by parental substance addiction, leaving them to care for their younger siblings. Zoe's student was kicked out of home and had difficulty obtaining residence at a youth refuge.

Zoe worked with youth refuge staff to ensure that her students' situation was understood, and cultural safety ensured, leading to short-term residency. Zoe supported the student to obtain Centrelink allowances, took them to appointments and coordinated with social workers and youth refuge staff to secure her student with housing. S2W supplied essentials funding and our partner, Kmart, contributed to school and household supplies.

The student's attendance at school increased and they and their parent started counselling towards hopeful reparation. The S2W business development team helped the student obtain a job with our partner, Accor, supporting them in independent living.

The student has recently completed their HSC, something they never thought they would achieve. Zoe helped her student enrol in vocational study to undertake courses aligned with their interest in mental health and visual arts. The student recently obtained their provisional licence with the support of the driving school that Zoe coordinated lessons with. The student is now thriving with the support of S2W, their school, our business partners, and the youth refuge.



## Mitchell

Mitchell is a proud Wiradjuri man who was unsure what he wanted to do after school. With the support of his project officer, Mitchell identified study options aligned with his interests. Feeling overwhelmed with the application processes, Mitchell's project officer assisted him to apply to Western Sydney University (WSU), where he commenced a Bachelor of Visual Communication. Despite excelling academically, Mitchell was socially anxious about university. Mitchell's project officer linked Mitchell in with the Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education at WSU, which kept him engaged with students and staff, particularly through isolating periods of COVID.

Mitchell successfully completed his degree, and while officially having completed his post placement support period with our program, maintained mentorship with his project officer. Mitchell indicated that he did not feel ready to enter the workforce and S2W staff were aware of a suitable traineeship at WSU and encouraged and assisted Mitchell to apply. Mitchell was the successful applicant and works to support other young Indigenous students, with the same Badanami team that assisted him.

Mitchell's parents say that he has gained incredible confidence and self-sufficiency since he started working. Without the nature of S2W to provide ongoing support, Mitchell may not have finished his studies and gained employment on completion.

# CASE STUDIES

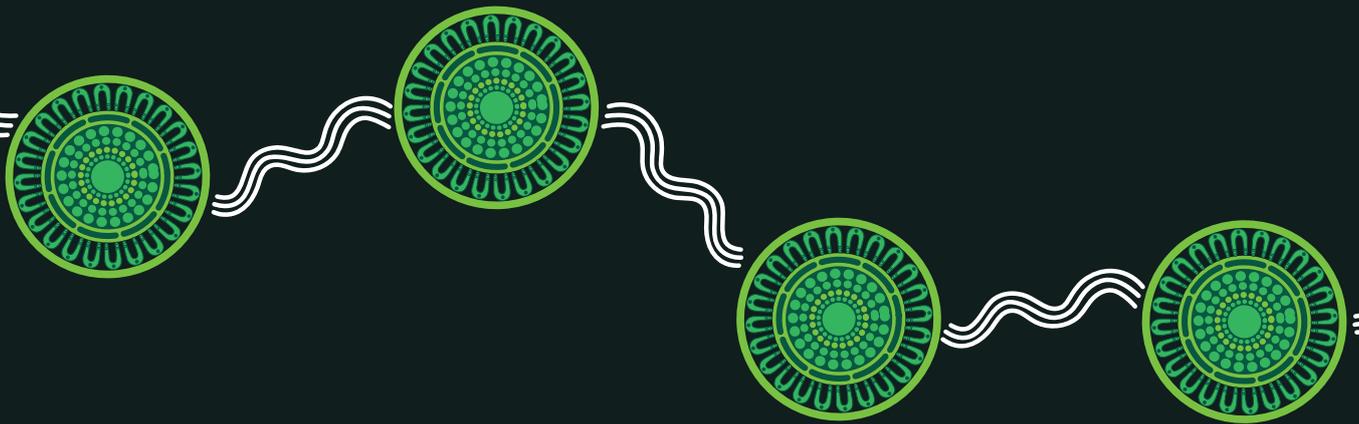
## Isobella

Current S2W participant Isobella was due to commence an automotive apprenticeship with a close family friend when she suffered the trauma of locating the friend deceased in his home. Isobella's mental health took a decline, and when she joined S2W, Isobella had progressed her wellbeing and was prepared to take on her HSC.

Brad, Isobella's S2W project officer, encouraged her to continue at school towards a transition pathway. After a short period, Isobella reached out to Brad and let him know she wanted to leave school. Isobella wanted to pursue an apprenticeship, and the S2W team worked to secure an opportunity for Isobella with Worthington BMW.

With Brad's assistance, Isobella applied to BMW. Brad went the extra mile to notify the employer that Isobella was a S2W participant. Isobella was successful in winning the job with preparation assistance from Brad.

Isobella has overcome significant mental health issues to get to where she is today. Isobella considered leaving her apprenticeship shortly after starting and through S2W's post-secondary support model, Brad supported Isobella to stick with it and coordinated extra support for her with her employer. Isobella has finished her first year of her apprenticeship at the end of 2024 and has been recognised widely throughout S2W to her peers and our partners for her enormous success.



## Gamuda Internship

Our partner, Gamuda, is supporting S2W participants, Breanna and Jai, as construction graduate interns throughout their university first year. Support from Gamuda and S2W has enabled them to flourish culturally, professionally, and academically.

Breanna, a proud Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi woman, is studying a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Sustainable Environmental Futures, and minoring in Environmental Health at WSU. Breanna's upbringing and cultural connection led to her interest in sustainability, telling us "I got interested in this area of expertise from how I grew up, which was very connected to the land; we learned how to conserve the land that we grew on and ensure that we did not harm anything, and that was the way I was raised".

Jai, a proud Kamilaroi man, is studying a Bachelor of Construction Management at Western Sydney University. Emphasising the power of on-the-job learning to complement his studies, Jai says "so far it's been really good. What I have been learning in class, I've seen on site, so, putting two and two together it really helps me learn and do better in any assignments or exams that I've got".

The students have reflected on the level of support given to them by Gamuda, appreciating the professional and personal connection that Gamuda and the team have given them. The growth is two-way, echoed in the sentiment by Matthew Murphy, who is the Gamuda Aboriginal Programs and Participation Manager. Speaking of the connection that Gamuda staff have created with Breanna and Jai, Matthew tells us that "on a personal level being able to support them and interact with them throughout their roles and their studies has been great.

TO Their confidence has really boomed over the last 12 months they've been with us". WORK

# TESTIMONIALS



## ALUMNI

"The program has opened so many avenues for my cultural and career growth. I'm extremely grateful for them coming to my school and allowing me to engage with amazing opportunities and have so many new experiences. It has connected me closer to my culture and to my mob. I recommend this program to any Indigenous student who wants to further their cultural journey and career path".

– Taylor, proud Darkinjung woman and program Alumni

## SCHOOL

"You can't even summon the words how valuable S2W is to Pacific Pines State High School. It gives the students purpose and a sense of direction. Knowing that they have someone backing them, they feel they're never alone. The program helps us on the ground from the beginning, letting students know that there is support and direction, and that they can make something of themselves and be whatever they aspire to be".

– Paige, teacher at Pacific Pines State High School

## ACCOR PARTNERSHIP

The NRL and Accor have established additional support for S2W participants through our strong existing relationship. Throughout 2024, 13 participants have gained employment with Accor on a full-time or casual basis in their hotels. A further four trainees are undertaking Accor's new traineeship model being piloted on the Gold Coast with a national launch planned for 2025.

Accor is supporting two Responsible Service of Alcohol and Responsible Conduct of Gambling courses across NSW with Zeal Futures at their venues to provide over 60 S2W participants with their certificates.

Josh Hanley, the Senior Manager of Social Impact at Accor is a strong advocate for the partnership between NRL S2W and Accor and is exceptionally proud of collaborative outcomes.

"We love to collaborate with S2W as there is a strong emphasis on education, and for us education is absolutely critical for our young ones. With Accor being an employer that can support that education journey, but also provide an alternate option post-school, the program aligns exactly with our goals and it's why this connection still thrives today".

– Josh Hanley, Senior Manager of Social Impact at Accor



# PROGRAM DELIVERY

## YEAR 11

### JOIN THE PROGRAM

Project officers engage with selected year 11 students from participating schools. 1:1 mentoring is provided to create career development plans that include their career aspirations, personal goals, and actions they can take to help achieve them. This phase is focused on building a solid foundation and exposing the students to new experiences including:

- NRL Indigenous Youth Leadership Summit
- Social and Emotional Wellbeing on Country days
- Casual employment

## YEAR 12

### PRE TRANSITION PLANNING

Students are supported to act on their career development plans. Project officers facilitate a variety of development activities including job-readiness, cultural and leadership workshops, and experiential activities with clubs, sponsors, universities and corporate organisations. Project officers assist students in securing work experience and completing university early entry and scholarship applications.

- Career inspire days – onsite industry experience
  - University camps
  - Work experience

## TRANSITION

### EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION OUTCOME

Graduating students are equipped to make informed choices about their future careers, are armed with exceptional leadership capabilities and have a solid foundation in job-ready skills and qualifications.

- S2W Awards Night
- Internships and Scholarships
- Successfully enrol in post-secondary education or secure full-time employment

## ALUMNI

### LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The program continues to assist participants for up to 12 months post-school. Through ongoing mentoring, guidance, support with their 'post-school' plan, and providing access to support services, participants are well placed for a smooth transition to life after school.

- Advice and guidance
- Career advancement opportunities
- Access to support services

# KEY EVENTS & INITIATIVES



## WELLBEING DAYS

Social and emotional wellbeing has been identified as one of the most important aspects of our participants' lives; one that greatly impacts their growth in achieving their aspirations.

Students participate in men's and women's cultural workshops and are shown ways to connect to Country and people, heal trauma and assist with their journeys.



## UNIVERSITY CAMPS

We are creating the next generation of leaders at our University Inspire Camps. Inspire Camps aim to help participants explore future pathways to tertiary education while furthering their connection to culture.

"University was never an option for me at the start, but when I attended the Western Sydney University Inspire Camp it really pushed the idea of my potential and what I can do! And now university is a pathway for me"  
 – Emily, Dharug woman and S2W participant



## INDUSTRY DAYS

Participants hear from and connect with a range of services, companies, and educational providers.

"Industry days provide participants with an immersive workplace experience. Students make connections with employers, and are exposed to jobs, workplaces and industries, helping to expand their perspective when it comes to options after school"  
 – Damon, Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal man and S2W Project Officer



## AWARDS NIGHT

A night where participants, teachers, businesses and schools are honoured for their achievements and support of the program. Awarded the University Student of the Year in 2023, Neville, a proud Yorta Yorta man said: "I was the first person in my family to attend university and it was a daunting prospect, but the S2W program helped me take the next step towards my dream job".

## YEAR 12 GRADUATION CELEBRATIONS

Our high school graduates are celebrated with a special social event, where they connect with their peers across their region, in recognition of their graduation milestone. Our year 12 graduation celebrations bring people together as an acknowledgement of the hard work and dedication of our students, particularly for many who are the first members of their family to complete year 12.

"The 'Race the Raiders' graduation event was an exciting afternoon, and it was great being able to connect with other School to Work students who we don't get to often see". – Rubi, S2W alumni

