



**SCHOOL  
TO WORK**

# THE SCOOP

Volume 15



**Hello, New  
Connections,  
Goodbye,  
Comfort  
Zone!**

**Creating the Next  
Generation of Leaders at  
the Western Sydney  
University Inspire Camp**



**School to  
Work  
Alumni:  
Working in  
the NRL**

## About Us

The School to Work (S2W) Program was developed in response to research highlighting that Indigenous youth who had not found an employment or training pathway six months after leaving school, had a significantly higher chance of being long term unemployed.

Operational since 2012 and utilises the positive profile of rugby league to support and encourage Year 11 & 12 Indigenous students to achieve their HSC and prepares them as they transition from school to employment or further education.

## Our Purpose

**Prepare** our participants for transition

**Connect** our participants to culture

**Provide** our participants with access and exposure to opportunities

## Message from the School to Work Operations Manager - Jason Solomon

Over the past four months, the NRL School to Work program has achieved significant milestones and delivered impactful events. We successfully hosted the Indigenous Youth Summit, providing a platform for young leaders to connect and share their visions. Our industry days offered students valuable insights into various career paths, while university and cultural camps enriched their educational and cultural experiences.

We are proud to celebrate the NRL debuts of our alumni, Heath Mason and Fletcher Myers, and we continue to hear inspiring stories from other alumni working within the game. Our NAIDOC celebrations and community days were a testament to our commitment to cultural recognition and community engagement.

Additionally, we launched our Reconciliation Action Plan at our second Elevate status, marking a significant step in our journey towards reconciliation. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our partners and supporters for their continued support, which makes all these achievements possible.

On top of this we continued to support our participants successfully transition into employment while we continued providing support for our Year 12 participants as they are preparing for completion of Year 12 and HSC exams.







# Hello, New Connections. Goodbye, Comfort Zone!

Titans School to Work region held its third Careers Day at the Mercure Gold Coast Resort. This year's event was a little different, using the concept of speed dating. Students were given the opportunity to go on mini dates with each stakeholder for 10 minutes getting a brief insight from various employers and tertiary providers and later networking and yarning with those that interested them the most.

Energex and Gold Coast City Marina provided a hands-on experience. Students got to explore and learn about a Redmond Garu EWP truck, one that is used to restore electricity, as well as learn about the different components of a Cruise Craft allowing them to expand their knowledge on the various trades involved in building a boat.

***“Get comfortable being uncomfortable”***

- NRLW Player Jaime Chapman

Special guest Gold Coast Titans NRLW player Jaime Chapman shared her journey of schooling and the challenges she faced transitioning into her football career. Jaime encouraged students to “get comfortable with being uncomfortable” and to make the most of days like this.

The day was a huge success with students walking away feeling more confident and informed about their future after learning & exploring all pathway options. Participant Keanu Hagstrom said, “The biggest takeaway for myself today was that I got to meet Dan from Energex and I got to have a tour around the trucks and the equipment they use from a day-to-day basis. Having this hands-on experience gave me an insight into what my future may look like”.

Special thanks to Gold Coast Titans, Jaime Chapman, Multiplex, Accor, Superior Walls & Ceilings, Gold Coast City Marina, Boating Industries Australia, Energex, Australian Defence Force, Wesley Mission, Gold Coast Youth Services, QUT, Griffith University – Gumurri Unit, Bond University, Southern Cross University, TAFE QLD and The University of Queensland for your continued support of the program and our participants.

School to Work look forward to continuing this journey with our participants as they near the end of their final year of schooling and transition into their chosen pathway.



**Want to view the video recap from the day, press the orange play icon to watch.**





# Creating the Next Generation of Leaders at the Western Sydney University Inspire Camp



***“University was never an option for me at the start, but when I met Jayde my mentor, she really pushed the idea of my potential and what I can do! And now that University is a pathway, Jayde is keeping me connected to culture whilst also experiencing a taste of uni life”. - Emily Benge (S2W Participant)***

In the spirit of this year's NAIDOC theme 'Keep the Fire Burning! Blak Loud and Proud!' School to Work held an inspire camp in collaboration with Western Sydney University, which emphasised the sense of belonging within the School to Work Program.

The first of its kind to be held in the region, the camp was held over three days at the WSU Hawkesbury Campus, the camp aimed to help participants explore future pathways to higher education while furthering connection to culture.

Students got a glimpse into university life, allowing them to engage in a variety of workshops and activities. From interactive sessions with faculty members to a range of cultural sessions, participants truly immersed themselves in the academic environment of university.

Joel Thompson from the NRL State of Mind Program joined us to speak with the students about stress management. From this session, students took away some powerful skills and techniques on how they can manage their stress moving forward.

Highlighting the significance of cultural connection, the WSU Inspire Camp provided students with opportunities to learn more about their culture through yarning circles, allowing students to open up about their own personal experiences and cultural identity. Over the three days, students also learned and practiced the art of traditional dance, concluding the camp with a performance at our presentation lunch.



**Want to view the video recap from the camp, press the orange play icon to watch.**





# Deadly S2W Participants



## Lights, Camera, Action!

Students from our School to Work Gold Coast region, were exclusively invited to take part in filming Kmart/Target's corporate video to showcase the strong relationship between Kmart/Target & School to Work and its commitment to supporting the program and its participants with employment opportunities.

The video will debut at the Kmart & Target Store Managers Conference in late August. School to Work staff and students were also given a personalised tour of the Cannon Hill store where they received an insight into what goes on behind-the-scenes and learnt about the various roles that are available both on the floor and on the dock.

Thanks so much Brendon and the Kmart/Target team for having us and for your continued & valuable support.

## School to Work Participant makes his NRL Debut as #288 Wests Tiger

School to Work participant Heath Mason made his NRL debut with the Wests Tigers in Round 15 against the Gold Coast Titans, taking home the win and living his childhood dream. Heath has been a participant of the School to Work program since 2022 and attended the 2022 NRL Indigenous Youth Leadership Summit. Congratulations Heath! S2W are proud to be a small part of your journey since 2022.



## Evie Smith Awarded Newcastle Universities Ma & Morley Scholarship

Evie Smith was awarded a Ma & Morley Scholarship with the Wollotuka Institute at the University of Newcastle.

A School to Work student since 2022, she successfully transitioned into University and is now studying a Bachelor of Renewable Energy Engineering with Newcastle University.



Want to view Evie's full story, press the orange play icon to watch.





## Supporting First Nations Students at the Dragons School to Work Careers Day

The Dragons NRL School to Work region held a Careers Day that saw over 60 First Nations students in attendance on the land of the Dharawal Peoples at the Illawarra Steelers.

The day focused on connecting and collaborating with local businesses and educational providers. Participants had the opportunity to hear from and connect with a range of services, companies and educational providers. Catering to all passions within the group of students the day aimed at offering career and employment opportunities, and further educational pathways students may be interested in as they transition from school into their future aspirations and career pathways.

The day gave Year 11 and 12 students exposure to various organisations offering career and employment opportunities, and further educational pathways students may be interested in as they transition from school into their future aspirations and careers pathways.

“Today allows for them to have an opportunity to experience and create connections with stakeholders so that their able to have some options for when they leave school, but also have the support needed to help them make that transition”. – Tara McGrath-West (NRLW Player)

Thank you to Australian Defence Force Academy, Blue Scope Steel, Bunnings, Kmart, Career Trackers, The Coomaditchie Foundation, Fulton Hogan, Zeal Future, Oscar Group, Octec Limited, TAFE NSW, International College of Management, Sydney University, Western Sydney University an University of Wollongong for their continued support to the program and it's participants.



**Want to view the video recap from the day, press the orange play icon to watch.**



***“There's a lot of pressure on us to know what to do after school, so coming to days like this we get to have a feel of what we can do and what opportunities are out there for us”. – S2W Participant Lucy Brannigan***







# NRL Launched Second Elevate RAP During Reconciliation Week

The NRL launched its second elevate RAP during National Reconciliation Week on the beautiful lands of the Gadigal and Bidjigal people. An elevate RAP actively champions initiatives to uphold the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and drive systemic and transformational change.

Being the first National Sporting Organisation to create a RAP, from its inception, the NRL has maintained a strong connection and a proud history with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, who have played the game since its early days. Rugby League has served as a platform for the sharing of history, culture, inclusivity, passion, and pride.

Want to view NRL's Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan [click here](#).



## Keeping the Fire Burning During NAIDOC Week with S2W





# School to Work Alumni: Working in the Game of NRL



## LARA GEORGE - NRL GRASSROOTS TEAM

A proud Darug woman, Lara started working with the NRL back in November 2022 as an Assistant Development Officer. Lara gets to go to all different schools and run fun games and drills with young kids, building the game of Rugby League one school at a time. The NRL has been a place Lara always wanted to work with and be apart of and is grateful to have become an ADO.



## TAYLOR KELLY - INDIGENOUS CONTENT TEAM

A proud Darkinjung woman, Taylor has been working within the game for just over a year as the Indigenous Content Assistant in the Indigenous Strategies Team. Throughout the year Taylor has experienced some amazing opportunities such as being apart of the 2024 All Stars week which she said was an unreal experience. Taylor has always dreamt of working at the NRL and is grateful to her Project Officer – Scott Foreman for helping her become one step closer to achieving her dreams.



## GEORGIA CHERRI - NRL SCHOOL'S TEAM

A proud Darug woman. Georgia started her role as the NRL Schools Teams Administration Support in December 2023. Growing up in a sport was a huge part of Georgia's life, whether it was playing, watching or coaching. So, when it came time to figure out what she wanted to do post school, working towards a career in sports was the obvious choice. When the opportunity came to her to start a role at the NRL, Georgia jumped at the chance and said "this has been a really exciting past 9 months, getting to now work at the NRL is an amazing full circle moment!".



## OLIVIA TALBOTT - NRL CONTENT TEAM

A proud Kamilaroi woman. Olivia joined the S2W Program within the Dragons region in 2022. With the support of her Project Officer Ani Ta'ase she did some work experience during the 2022 NRL Grand Final week with the content team. This opportunity then led to Olivia gaining a Junior Content Producer role within the team in April 2023. Olivia always knew she would love a role like this and without the support and guidance of the S2W Program she wouldn't be in the position she's in.







## Titans Region host a Community Collaboration Day

The Titans NRL School to Work team held its inaugural Community Collaboration event. The day was an opportunity to showcase the NRL School to Work program to the wider community, create relationships, explore opportunities and come together to support and inspire the next generation of our First Nations youth.

Aunty Linda Buimaiwai opened the event with a beautiful Welcome to Country, sharing her connection to country and dedication to working with mob and how important it is for community to come together to learn from each other, share ideas and experiences and support each other.

The event was hosted by Dean Widders with special guests Dennis Watt, Gold Coast Titans Executive Chairman, Alex Wells, Gold Coast Titans Community Inclusion Officer, Preston Campbell, Gold Coast Titans players Brian Kelly & Jacob Alick and S2W participants Hayley Lyons, Sarah Lyons & Lakeeta McGrath.

Dennis & Alex spoke about the positive impact and outcomes of the program that's enriched so many First Nations youth and their families across the Gold Coast & Northern Rivers regions over the last 7 years and continues to do so.

Brian Kelly & Jacob Alick-Wiencke took time from their busy schedule to come and share their experiences of meeting and working with the students from the program and shared their personal journeys and what it means for mob to have access to opportunities like the NRL School to Work program.

The day was a huge success with more than 21 community organisations, current & new, networking and coming together to learn about and share their experiences of the program that for over 10 years has been using the positive profile of Rugby League to support Year 11 & 12 First Nations students with their career aspirations.

Thank you to everyone who attended. We're looking forward to building further connections and continuing to work with you all more to create amazing opportunities for our First Nations youth. A special thank you to the Gold Coast Titans for their continued support of the program and its participants.



***"The whole program's just uplifting in terms of the lives it's changed, the confidence young people gain out of the program, the opportunities that come their way. The way it not only enriches their lives but the lives of their families and community".***

***– Dennis Watt, Executive Chairman of the Gold Coast Titans***



**Want to view the video recap from the day, press the orange play icon to watch.**



# Lachlan Masters Announced as the 2024 Lotte Weiss Scholarship Recipient



***“I am extremely humbled and grateful to be selected as this year’s recipient and through this process I have come to learn so much about Lotte and her story which has inspired me beyond words – I will be sure to carry on her positive attitude and mindset as I continue with my studies”***

***– Lachlan Masters, Lotte Weiss Scholarship Recipient***

The Lotte Weiss Foundation were delighted to announce Lachlan Master’s as the 2024 Lotte Weiss Scholarship recipient earlier this week at the Sydney Jewish Museum. Lachlan, a proud Wiradjuri man with aspirations of becoming a doctor, started a Bachelor’s of Sports Science at the University of Newcastle this year chasing that very dream. After joining the NRL School to Work Program in 2022, Lachlan has taken every opportunity with both hands and this scholarship was no different.



The Lotte Weiss Scholarship is funded by brothers Gary and Johnny Weiss who both have a passion for supporting First Nations communities and this scholarship is one of many initiatives that they are involved with. The scholarship totalling \$10,000 and is awarded to a first-year university student who is a part of the NRL School to Work Program to support them as they transition into tertiary education.



This is the third year of the Lotte Weiss Scholarship with the calibre of applications continuing to grow each year. Lachlan was selected based on his outstanding academic achievements, community engagement and desire to positively impact the wider community.



**Want to view the video recap from the day, press the orange play icon to watch.**





# Current and Rising NRL Stars Inspire at School to Work Careers Day

Over 40 First Nations students participating in the NRL's School to Work Program attended a career expo at AAMI Park earlier in the week to help them prepare for their future aspirations and career pathways after completing high school. The interactive day gave Year 11 and 12 students exposure to various organisations offering career and employment opportunities, and further educational pathways they may be interested in as they transition from school into their chosen career.



Catering to all passions within the group, students heard from a range of companies including, Suburban Rail Loop Authority, Laing O'Rourke, Wamarra, Mob Jobs, Accor, Victoria University, Kmart/Target and Veolia.



Students from Thornbury High School, Hallam Senior College, University High, Reservoir High School, Sunbury College, Point Cook Secondary College and Gleneagles Secondary College commenced the day with a smoking ceremony from Wurundjeri man Alex Kerr on the AAMI Park concourse, before hearing from current and rising stars of Melbourne Storm.



Storm First Nations Academy players Gabriel Satrick and Matthew Hill spoke to the students about their journeys to where they are today and what it has taken to pursue their ambition of playing NRL.



Club captain Harry Grant and Xavier Coates also spoke to the students about their career journeys and students learnt that Xavier Coates is studying a Bachelor of Education at University saying "You don't want to just be known as an NRL player, you want to be known as a good human being first and foremost."



**Want to view the video recap from the day, press the orange play icon to watch.**





# Industry Visits

## Under Construction, but not Under Ambitious with Gamuda Australia

School to Work's national partners, Gamuda, delivered a site tour of the M1 Project for students interested in the Civil Construction Industry in the Hunter Region.

Students met with a broad range of talent and gained valuable insight into opportunities on the M1 Project, and in the industry in general, including internships and tertiary pathways in Construction Management, Civil Engineering, Environmental Science/Management, Business and Commerce, as well as apprenticeship and labouring pathways.



## Making Moves with Multiplex Construction's

We teamed up with Multiplex to deliver a site tour visit of the John Hunter Health & Innovation Precinct building which is currently under construction and soon to become a Health Campus which will deliver enhanced facilities to meet the demands of the Greater Newcastle, Hunter New England and northern NSW regions.

Students came with aspirations that fall under the construction industry and got to learn and understand all the different roles that Multiplex have to offer, and what pathways are available to them.



## College Tour Vibes all Day, Every Day!

School to Work provided participants with a tour of the international College of Managements Manly Campus.

Students got to learn about all the various courses the college have to offer and connect with faculty members to help prepare them for a smooth transition from School to higher education.







# Empowering Participants Through Education & Culture

The University of Canberra Inspire Camp marked a significant milestone for students in the NRL School to Work program as they took further steps in their cultural and educational journey. Held in collaboration with the University of Canberra and the Canberra Raiders, the camp aimed at exploring future pathways to higher education while furthering connection to culture and community.

The camp was held over three days at the University of Canberra and offered students a glimpse into university life, allowing them to engage in a variety of workshops and activities tailored to encourage students to consider alternative pathways. From campus tours to interactive sessions with faculty members, participants immersed themselves in the academic environment of the University of Canberra.

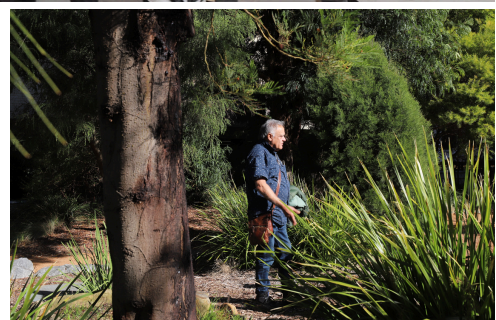
Highlighting the significance of cultural connection, the UC Inspire Camp provided students with opportunities to learn more about their culture through on-country experiences and Story Ground sessions led by Dr. Paul Collis. It also provided students with opportunities to share their own knowledge and experiences with their peers in a Yarning Circle facilitated by Jamal Fogarty. These sessions provided a platform for students to explore and celebrate their Indigenous heritage, fostering a deeper understanding of cultural identity and pride.

Another important moment during the camp was the visit to the Vincent Namatjira Exhibit at the National Gallery of Australia. This exhibition offered students a valuable insight into contemporary Indigenous art, showcasing themes of history, identity, and social commentary through Namatjira's artwork.

The Canberra Raiders played a pivotal role in the camp by offering exclusive insights into careers in sport and connecting students further with the Canberra Raiders community. A tour of the Canberra Raiders Centre provided students with firsthand knowledge of the operations behind a professional NRL team, while a visit to GIO Stadium allowed the students to join the NRL team for their Captains Run, furthering that connection to community.

The conclusion of the UC Inspire camp was marked by a presentation at GIO Stadium, followed by attending the Round 15 Raiders v Cowboys game. This experience not only celebrated the achievements of the participants but also emphasised the sense of belonging within the Canberra Raiders community.

As the UC Inspire camp concluded, participants have furthered their cultural connection and Identity. The camp has empowered a new generation of leaders who are poised to make a positive impact in their communities and beyond.



**Want to view the video recap from the day, press the orange play icon to watch.**



# PREPARE • CONNECT • PROVIDE

## Behind the Scenes with the Illawarra Dragons on Game Day

Participants Alize Fittler, Kyle Giltrow, Riley Knight and Randall Clifford were selected to experience a 'behind the scenes' of a home game day event with the Illawarra Dragons. The group toured through the different department's that operate on home game days. Gaining an insight into various departments, such as partnerships, memberships, merchandise, media and community activations. Thank you to the Dragons events team for the opportunity to be part of the day. A special thank you to Ashleigh Miranda who organised our visits with the departments especially for being such a busy day with the Dragons Indigenous Round.



## Boots Tell a Story During NAIDOC Celebration

Ahead of Melbourne Storm's NAIDOC Celebration match in Round 17, seven S2W students visited Storm HQ to paint player boots as part of the celebrations. Nanjera Pender, Marni Briggs, Emerald Wood, Ruby-Lee Brolly, Kaiaan Thorpe, Jedah-Lee Wickey and James Aitken were given the name of each player who's boots they would be painting to research that specific player and their journey and were then giving the task of bringing it to life through their own culture on each player's boots. The students, from Thornbury High School and Hallam Senior College presented the players with their unique set of painted boots which they wore during Storm's clash with the Canberra Raiders at AAMI Park. The students also had the opportunity on the evening to be part of the guard of honour on the field ahead of the match-up as the Storm side entered the arena, wearing their special boots.

## Sharing Stories and Passing on Knowledge at Indigenous Elders High Tea

School to Work participants who were selected for the NRL Indigenous Youth Leadership Summit to represent the Dragons had the opportunity to be invited by the club to attend the Dragons Community elders High Tea. Held every year at WIN Stadium, Jack Talbott, Lucy Brannigan, Randall Clifford and Cruz McGuinness spent the morning sharing stories about the leadership summit and elders sharing past knowledge of community and background stories.







## Thank you for your support!

School to Work would like to acknowledge and thank the following organisations & educational institutions for their commitment to support the program:

- Accor
- Australian Defence Force
- Boating Industries Australia
- Bluescope Steel
- Bunnings
- Canberra Raiders
- Career Trackers
- Energex
- Fulton Hogan
- Gamuda
- Gold Coast City Marina
- Gold Coast Titans
- Gold Coast Youth Services
- Griffith University - GUMURRI Unit
- International College of Management
- Kmart/ Target Group
- Laing O'Rourke
- Lotte Weiss Foundation
- Melbourne Storm
- Mob Jobs
- Multiplex
- Newcastle University - Wollotuka Institute
- Octec Limited
- Oscar Group
- QUT
- Superior Walls & Ceilings
- St George Illawarra Dragons
- Suburban Rail Loop Authority
- Sydney University
- TAFE NSW
- TAFE QLD
- The Coomaditchie Foundation
- University of Canberra
- University of Wollongong
- Veolia
- Victoria University
- Wamarra
- Wesley Mission
- Western Sydney University
- Zeal Futures



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[www.nrl.com/community/school-to-work/](http://www.nrl.com/community/school-to-work/)



**SCHOOL TO WORK**

## What's going on in your Indigenous Community

Click on your region below to learn about what's going on in your Indigenous Community

**SYDNEY**

**MELBOURNE**

**BRISBANE**

**CENTRAL COAST**

**NEWCASTLE**

**GOLD COAST**

**CANBERRA**