



**SCHOOL
TO WORK**

THE SCOOP

November, 2023



**The School
to Work
Inaugural
Corporate
Golf Day**

**11 Year Partnership with
the Accor Indigenous
Program**



**School to
Work
Participants
Excel in their
Aspiring
Fields**

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

As we approach the end of another impactful year, I am thrilled to share the incredible successes and milestones achieved through the NRL School to Work program in 2024. The unwavering support from each one of you has played a pivotal role in making a positive difference in the lives of numerous students.

Throughout the year, the NRL School to Work program remained steadfast in its commitment to supporting students, whether in their educational journey or in assisting them as they transition into employment or post-schooling education. It is heartening to witness the tangible impact we have collectively made on the lives of these young individuals.

A significant highlight of the year was our Inaugural S2W Awards night, a momentous occasion where we celebrated not only the achievements of our participants but also acknowledged the invaluable contributions of our stakeholders and supporters. It was a testament to the collaborative spirit that defines our community and the shared commitment to the success of each individual involved in the program.

The success story continues with the successful execution of workshops and placements across all regions, which you will read about in this newsletter. These workshops have been instrumental in providing valuable insights, skills, and opportunities for growth to our participants. Your dedication to the success of these workshops has not gone unnoticed, and the impact is evident in the positive outcomes we continue to witness.

As we close out the year, we take pride in the remarkable achievements and successes that have been realised. None of this would have been possible without the unwavering support of the NRL, our NRL Partner clubs, employers, universities, partner schools, Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers, and, most importantly, our participants and their families.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each one of you for your dedication and commitment to the NRL School to Work program. Your collective efforts have made a lasting impact on the lives of the students we serve.

As we approach the festive season, I would like to wish you all a safe and enjoyable Christmas period. May it be filled with joy, warmth, and moments of celebration with your loved ones. Looking ahead, I am excited about the opportunities and challenges that the new year will bring, and I am confident that, together, we will continue to make a positive impact on the lives of the young Indigenous students we support.

Thank you for your continued commitment and support.



School to Work Hosts Inaugural Corporate Golf Day

“I think programs like this are really important for our young mob because those last years of high school can be really stressful. Having that extra support can be the difference for many young people.” - Andrew Fifita

Andrew Fifita shared a bit about his experience working with a local high school and Indigenous youth. Current and past NRL players Andrew Fifita, Joel Thompson and Jesse Ramien who have all supported the NRL School to Work Program over the years. Attended the golf day and Q&A session, hosted by the great Dean Widders. In the session, players spoke about a range of topics including, transitioning into retirement, NRL Grand Final, Koori Knockout and what it takes to be successful in your chosen field.

In September S2W hosted it's first corporate golf day which was about bringing stakeholders together to celebrate, acknowledge and connect. The first of its kind but definitely not the last, the day was a huge success bringing together over 70 people from a range of businesses and industries.

The day started with some breakfast before players headed out for a round of golf in some of Sydney's best weather. After 18 holes the winners were announced with CBRE taking out the 2023 cup closely followed by Bennelong Energy Services and Gamuda.

After golf, all players returned to the club house for lunch and to hear from two NRL S2W participants who shared their journey – Chloe Levinge who is working at ACCOR and Brent Heyhorn who is with Bennelong Energy Services. Although their paths were different, the key message from both young people was how important it is to take every opportunity that is given to you and utilise the support around you.

This initiative was driven by Tayla Kafoa and Jefferson Taylor who currently manage business development for the program.



11 Year Partnership with Accor & the Indigenous Employment Program



“We love to partner with School to Work 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 educational journey but also provide an alternate option post school, the School to Work program aligns exactly with our program’s goals and it’s why this connection still thrives today.”
- Josh Hanly (Indigenous Programs Manager for Accor)

The connection between Accor and School to Work began since the inception of the School to Work Program, in 2012. Josh Hanly who is the Indigenous Programs Manager for Accor has spent a lot of his career tracking First Nations people working in the hospitality industry.

Josh has seen many School to Work participants come through the Accor Indigenous Employment Program, Accor not only shows what the hotel looks like from the inside. But provides many opportunities in other aspects, such as finance, sales & marketing and HR. Creating a professional suite of opportunities.

School to Work participants Chloe Levinge & Trinity Currie were a highlight of success from the Accor’s Indigenous Program. With Josh telling us the journey of how both girls got to where they are now.

Initially meeting Chloe & Trinity at a Titans School to Work Careers Day, three years ago and both girls being uncertain about exactly what they wanted to do post schooling. Josh and the Accor team spoke to them both about all the Accor hotels, about the industry, what they offer and how it’s a great place to train and learn, with it potentially being a stepping stone to your next role.

Invited to the Accor Indigenous Careers Day the following week. Both girls were highly engaged in the day and were further down the track placed at the Novotel in Surfers Paradise. From there they went on a journey of discovery in the hospitality industry.

Chloe had recently celebrated her 2 year work anniversary with Novotel in Surfers Paradise and was transferred from inside the property, from working in the rooms division to Novotel front of office team. Being the first point of call for all guests checking into the hotel. Josh said “Chloe takes great pride in what she does now, and when you speak to her she’s now starting to identify what the pathways to management are”.





Henry Muir Gains Dream Apprenticeship with Volvo Australia

Henry has always loved cars and had a passion for mechanics. Working on cars from a young age with his dad he is always eager to show updates on their work at his School to Work sessions. Jayde Garzaniti, Henry's Project Officer said within initially meeting Henry he had been confident with his career path and knowing his short and long-term goals. With a dream of one day opening his own mechanical shop, he is paving the way to reach that dream by achieving his short-term goals.

Sitting down with his Project Officer to discuss his options, Jayde supported Henry in obtaining a week's work experience with Volvo Australia as Henry wanted to experience a company to ensure they were mindful, kind and positive about learning steps within an apprenticeship.

Completing one week of work experience with Volvo Australia in the second last week of Term 2, Henry was extremely excited to be offered a full-time apprenticeship with Volvo Australia and will be starting 2024.

Monique Vuong: Showing Resilience

A proud Kamilaroi woman, Monique had a challenging time within her last year of schooling. Leaving Year 12 for a short period, the School to Work Program supported Monique in returning back to school. It was through the support of her Project Officer she was able to show resilience in face of adversity and find ways to bounce back.

Learning how to paint Aboriginal art through her older sister, Monique found comfort in the art space. Saying, her school art room is a place where she feels culturally safe and where she can express and be her true self. Immersing herself in the art space and her culture by completing her year 12 major art piece.

Monique's hard work paid off and she was able to graduate from her final year of schooling. An accomplishment she never thought would be possible but her through her resilience and determination she made it! Monique is still deciding what exact pathway she wants to explore after school and continues to work with her Project Officer.



Sports Journalist in the Making: Taimana Elers

Taimana Elers, from our Newcastle Knights region is an aspiring footy player and sports journalist. His Project Officer - Stephen Widders had organised for him to work alongside Jake Duke, who is a well-known Fox Sports Australia reporter and presenter. Taimana was able to shadow Jake during an NRL game, watching all the behind the scenes whilst Jake interviewed and casted commentary. Learning and experiencing all the ins and outs of a sports journalist, Taimana was able to get a taste of his aspiration in becoming a sports journalist.



Gold Coast Titans Careers Day

Our School to Work - Gold Coast Titans region held a Careers Day in the sunny Gold Coast, it was a great day where School to Work participants from the Gold Coast Titans region got to directly connect with stakeholders and hear from businesses, educational institutions and companies.

This firsthand insight is exactly what the School to Work Program provides to ensure our participants are on the right path to employment or further study.



2023 Lotte Weiss Scholarship Winner: Meripa Teo

Meripa Teo, from our St George Illawarra Dragons region is our 2023 Lotte Weiss Scholarship recipient. Meripa is currently in her first year of University studying a Bachelor of Engineering, and through the NRL School to Work Program has secured a Cadetship with Bluescope Steel as a Materials Engineer. This scholarship will support Meripa with the financial support she may need within her first year of university.



School to Work and NRL State of Mind team up to deliver SEWB on Country

We partnered with State of Mind, Black Fit Fitness, Headspace and Kmart to deliver two Social and Emotional Wellbeing Days - SEWB on Country.

The term SEWB is used by many Indigenous Australians to describe the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing of a person. With the days highlighting the aspects of connection to culture, body, mind, emotions, family and kinship, community and country.

Over the two days Joel Thompson and Bryson Goodwin from the NRL State of Mind team delivered their program around mental health and wellbeing. Headspace was also in attendance to speak with our participants about mindfulness practices.

Black Fit Fitness and Kmart also delivered cultural workshops. With culture being a really personal foundation for Indigenous mob, participants worked through some mindful and physical activities, such as ochre creation, artwork and traditional Indigenous games.

It was a great two days for participants in the S2W Roosters and Knights region, thank you to all who helped this day come together!





School to Work Marks Significant Milestone

NRL School to Work marked a significant milestone with their inaugural awards night, a joyous occasion dedicated to celebrating outstanding achievements. It was an evening that shone a spotlight on hard work, acknowledging the dedication and effort that has fuelled the success of the program's participants.

The night took place at Pullman Sydney in Hyde Park, with staff, stakeholders and students celebrating the success of the program's 11th year, there was also some familiar rugby league faces recognised for their success with the program.

NRL Ambassadors Kennedy Cherrington, Brad Takarangi & Ruan Sims were in attendance on the night to congratulate all the award winners on stage. And, NRL legend Cliff Lyons who is the co-director alongside Gaven Sheehan at Bennelong Energy Services. Awarded the School to Work Employer of the Year for their commitment to providing opportunities for Indigenous school leavers.

School to Work would like to thank all that attended and special mentions to the following sponsors that contributed to each of the awards. - Bennelong Energy Services, Gamuda Australia, Ventia, Accor, Green by Nature, Gurugun and NRL Community.

- 2023 NRL School to Work Award Winners**
- Employer of the Year**
Bennelong Energy Services
- Trainee of the Year**
Crystal Walker
- Apprentice of the Year**
Rory Griffin
- Educator of the Year**
Central Coast Sports College
- University Student of the Year**
Neville Mansfield
- Student of the Year**
Hayley Lyons
- Indigenous Community Australian of the Year**
Lakeeta McGrath





School to Work Partners up with Link-Up NSW to Deliver a Cultural Day

School to Work had 6 schools from our Penrith Panthers catchment area bring their School to Work students out to engage in a Link-Up cultural session.

Uncle Dennis Dunn took the students through a smoking ceremony, Boomerang throwing, Indigenous painting and talked about several Aboriginal artefacts.

Link-Up ran some Traditional Indigenous Games which the students seemed to have heaps of fun with.

Was also great to have Penrith Panthers - Tyrone Peachey join us and speak to the students about his journey, hard work and motivation, as well as the importance of having a pathway lined up after school.





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
- Bennelong Energy Services
- Central Coast Sports College
- Gamuda Australia
- Green by Nature
- Lotte Weiss Foundation
- Pullman Sydney Hyde Park
- TAFE NSW
- Ventia
- Volvo Australia
- Westpac

FEEDBACK

For all feedback & enquiries,
please email
s2wadmin@nrl.com.au

 02 9359 8583

 www.nrl.com/community/school-to-work/



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