

# Creating legal career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Enhancing education and employment is fundamental to closing the gap in health and life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A collaboration between Legal Aid NSW, TAFE NSW and Macquarie University is working to achieve this objective through the Legal Career Pathways Program.

The program is the first of its kind in the NSW legal sector. It focuses on supporting the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities through education and employment pathways to legal careers. All participants are guaranteed a job at Legal Aid NSW for the duration of their studies.

Over the 4-year agreement, the Legal Career Pathways Program will:

- employ 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at Legal Aid NSW
- support employees to complete a qualification(s) in legal services
- create cohorts of scholars employed by Legal Aid NSW who support each other to achieve their vocational education and career goals
- build an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services workforce with the skills and capacity to deliver culturally appropriate services to clients and communities across NSW.

## Wraparound support

Designed using a 7-step model of vocational education developed by the Djurali team (formerly the Poche Centre), the program centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives and cultures. It provides wraparound support (including a community of practice to support participant managers) and, importantly, uses culturally safe practices, including recognising cultural and kinship obligations.

The program has so far facilitated employment for 32 participants in roles such as legal support, client services and grants administration. The educational qualifications of the participants continue to increase, as all participants are enrolled in or undertaking legal studies.

With a substantial boost to Legal Aid NSW's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce (from 6% to 8% since launching in 2022) and increased workplace diversity that reflects its client base, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are working across more locations in NSW to provide culturally appropriate

services to communities.

The program seeks to engage in real and meaningful action that supports TAFE NSW's Reconciliation Action Plan, Macquarie University's Reconciliation Statement and Legal Aid NSW's Closing the Gap commitments.