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## **Scholarship supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for a career in law**

A new university scholarship, named after one of the first Aboriginal people to be admitted to practice Law in Tasmania, will be offered to encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enrol in a Law Degree.

The Rosie Smith Law Scholarship is a collaboration between the Riawunna Centre for Aboriginal Education, the Law Faculty at the University of Tasmania and Tasmania Legal Aid.

It will be awarded annually to a first-year Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Law student and will continue over the four years of their Law degree.

The University of Tasmania and Tasmania Legal Aid recognise Rosie's contribution and are proud of the collaboration to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their academic and career journey within the law. The scholarship honours Rosie Smith's work with the Koori Courts in pioneering culturally relevant and inclusive justice in the Victorian County Courts, and in health and social justice issues for Aboriginal people in Tasmania.

The scholarship provides financial support through the Indigenous Student Support Program (ISSP) and dedicated support from an Aboriginal Student Adviser. Recipients will gain valuable work experience across diverse areas of legal practice at Tasmania Legal Aid and work placements aligned to Faculty of Law subjects in their third and fourth years, working on real world legal problems with academic and professional supervision.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Aboriginal Leadership at the University, Professor Greg Lehman, said improving access and pathways for Aboriginal students, from course entry through to employment, was a major priority for the University. "Opportunities such as this can be life changing for students. Rosie has inspired us all and we are delighted, with our collaborators, to honour her contribution in this way."

The Head of Service at the Riawunna Centre, Caroline Spotswood, said there was an enormous sense of pride and joy in what Rosie Smith has achieved: "Rosie Smith has worked incredibly hard over the past 30 years for her family and the Aboriginal community," she said.

The Dean of the Faculty of Law, Professor Michael Stuckey, said the opportunity to work with Riawunna and Tasmanian Legal Aid was exciting and important for the Law School. "We are committed to increasing access to the study of Law and to increasing the diversity within our School. The scholarship fits perfectly with this vision."

### **Rosie Smith**

Rosie Smith is a well-respected and important Aboriginal leader, activist, poet, writer, and proud mum, grandmother, and great grandmother. She was one of the first Tasmanian Aboriginal people to compete a Law degree and be admitted to the Bar.

Rosie's higher education journey started with Adult Education classes at her local Neighbourhood House, before she enrolled in Welfare Studies at TAFE. While working on public housing issues as a Family Support and Legal Aid Field Officer at the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, Rosie enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws.

During her final year of study in 1994, Rosie was awarded the State NAIDOC Aboriginal Scholar of the Year award and the National NAIDOC Aboriginal Scholar of the Year.

Rosie played a key role in the establishment of the Koori Courts of Victoria, holding senior positions from 2003 to 2016. She completed a Master of Public Health in 2005, while working at the Koori Courts. Rosie returned to nipaluna/Hobart in 2016 to a position in the Medical School at the University of Tasmania as the Aboriginal Health Careers Promotion Officer until her retirement in 2021.

Her career and achievements make Rosie an outstanding role model and inspiration for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law students.

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