

MEDIA RELEASE



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Indigenous medical students admitted through innovative program

Having helped train more than 100 Indigenous doctors, the University of Newcastle's Thurru Indigenous Health Unit is recruiting for its next intake of aspiring doctors.

Its unique [Miroma Bunbilla Program](#) provides an alternative pathway for Indigenous medical students. In Awabakal language meaning '*permit... take care of*', Miroma Bunbilla is a week-long intensive selection process that gives aspiring doctors the chance to prove their passion, aptitude and suitability to commence a medical degree.

Darren Nolan, a lecturer in the University's School of Medicine and Public Health and coordinator of Miroma Bunbilla, said the program was unique in Australia for its approach to selecting students to study Medicine.

"Our program recognises that Indigenous students often come from remote places with reduced access to traditional educational opportunities. In addition to that, their cultural context can be very different to that of non-Indigenous students," said Mr Nolan.

"We reach out nationally to find students with great potential and give them strong support to demonstrate their drive and capability to become good doctors."

Students are traditionally admitted to medical schools based on their Year 12 academic results and specific entrance exams. Evidence shows this method is not an accurate predictor of success for Indigenous students. It also unintentionally excludes many talented and committed candidates from studying Medicine.

The team from Thurru, led by Professor Peter O'Mara, has been visiting regional and remote areas to speak with communities about the Joint Medical Program, a partnership between the University of Newcastle and the University of New England. Aspiring medical students, including school leavers, undergraduates and mature-age students, are currently submitting applications to participate in the program in the first week of December.

A cohort of about 45 hopeful students will work with mentors to complete a number of tasks over the course of the week. Their written work and participation in problem-based and group-based learning will be assessed and a group of 17 will be selected to study in the Joint Medical Program next year.

University of Newcastle Pro Vice-Chancellor - Indigenous Strategy and Leadership, Mr Nathan Towney, said that working with Indigenous communities is a high priority for the University and that it is committed to widening participation and promoting diversity and increasing success for all.

"We are proud of our record in Indigenous higher education, innovation and engagement. The University of Newcastle, through innovative pathway programs and strong on-campus support, has now graduated over 100 Indigenous doctors," said Mr Towney.

“This year we will graduate 17 new Indigenous doctors and take in another 17 through the Miroma Bunbilla program.”

Applications for this year’s Miroma Bunbilla program are now open and will close on 31 October. The five-day program will be held from 30 November to 4 December and will be conducted online, with activities delivered via Zoom. Participants will have the opportunity to participate in the program from a nominated university facility or their home:

Further information on the Joint Medical Program and the application form are available at the [University of Newcastle website](#).

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