

MEDIA RELEASE

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Visionary gift supports new Indigenous medical scholarships

A \$1million gift from generous benefactors to Flinders University will establish an Indigenous student scholarship to increase the numbers of medically qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals working in their communities.

The Calthorpe Wong Indigenous Medical Scholarship has been established through the generosity of retired ophthalmologists Mary Calthorpe and George Wong, who previously worked at the Flinders Medical Centre, the Repatriation General Hospital at Daw Park and the Marion Road Eye Clinic.

The endowed gift donation is expected to provide \$80,000 annually to fund up to four scholarships each to the value of up to \$20,000 in an academic year (or in future years a mix of new and ongoing scholarships) to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates to study medicine.

Flinders University Vice-Chancellor Professor Colin Stirling says it's especially fitting that the scholarship has been made possible during NAIDOC Week.

"We're incredibly grateful to Drs Calthorpe and Wong for their determination to make a difference in this practical and meaningful way. It's a deeply significant moment to be able to initiate a new scholarship that will be able to support so many Indigenous students simultaneously," Professor Stirling says.

Successful applicants will receive a scholarship for up to five years of their studies at Flinders University Bedford Park or Flinders' Northern Territory Medical Program.

"It's our hope that people will be able to access medical care in their own region from people they identify with, speak their language and thoroughly understand their cultural background," Dr Calthorpe says.

"During our professional careers, we were honoured to have treated the traditional owners of this land," says Dr Wong. "We sought to understand the health challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Hence, we dedicate four scholarships in perpetuity for the education of Indigenous medical students. We place our trust and have confidence in these doctors to significantly improve Indigenous health outcomes."

Eligible applicants for the Calthorpe Wong Indigenous Medical Scholarship must identify as an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person and be accepted as active members of their Indigenous communities.

"This is a major step forward in helping to boost the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students being able to obtain medical qualifications, and then practise in their own communities –

and in particular reinforces the ten years of effort by our Northern Territory Medical Program to improve medical treatment for people in remote areas and help them lead longer, healthier lives” says Associate Professor Simone Tur, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) at Flinders University.

Applications for the new scholarships will commence in 2022 and can be made via Flinders University’s Student Information System. Scholarship recipients will be selected by a five-person Calthorpe Wong Indigenous Medical Scholarships Committee.

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