



Law Council
OF AUSTRALIA

2025 John Koowarta Reconciliation

LAW SCHOLARSHIP

Closing date: 16 September 2024

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised this document contains an image of a deceased person.



The John Koowarta Reconciliation Law Scholarship is designed to enhance the potential and assist an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student to enter the legal profession.

It is available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in an approved course of study provided by an Australian tertiary institute, which is a prerequisite to admission as a legal practitioner in any Australian jurisdiction.

The John Koowarta Reconciliation Law Scholarship commemorates John Koowarta, a member of the Winychanam community at Aurukun and a traditional owner of the Archer River region on Cape York Peninsula in Queensland. Mr Koowarta challenged the Queensland Government under the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) after its decision to prevent the Aboriginal Land Fund from acquiring a crown lease on a pastoral property for the Winychanam people. The decision by the Bjelke-Peterson Government was based on cabinet policy at the time, which opposed ownership of large tracts of land by Aboriginal peoples. The Queensland Government challenged the validity of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) in the High Court and was defeated. The High Court's decision was later pivotal in the recognition of native title in *Mabo v Queensland (No.2)*.

Mr Koowarta was described by Robert Tickner, the former Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (1991-96), as "an Australian hero who was a courageous fighter against Governments which discriminate against people on the basis of race." John Koowarta died in 1991 without fulfilling his dream of seeing his traditional lands returned.

The John Koowarta Reconciliation Law Scholarship Trust was established by the Law Council of Australia in 1994, with a \$200,000 contribution from the Federal Government.

The Law Council continues to act as trustee and administrator, with the aim of building the scholarship and promoting the study and practice of the law by more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Law Council is proud of the outstanding success of the John Koowarta Reconciliation Law Scholarship, which has assisted several Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in completing their legal studies, many of whom have gone on to make valuable contributions to their communities, the legal profession and Australia.

Last Year's Recipient

Mr Corey Blyth

Mr Corey Blyth was awarded the Law Council's 2024 John Koowarta Reconciliation Law Scholarship. Mr Corey Blyth is a proud Wiradjuri man and is currently in his fourth year of Bachelor of Criminology and Criminal Justice/Law at the University of NSW, Sydney.

During his studies Mr Blyth has attained outstanding grades and has worked as a legal intern, most recently at the NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Additionally, Mr Blyth has been a research assistant, working on social policy projects, tutoring fellow and prospective Indigenous law students at UNSW and volunteering within his local community.

Previous Recipients

The John Koowarta Reconciliation Law Scholarship has assisted a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law students across Australia to complete their legal studies. See the list of previous award winners below:

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|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ms Terri Janke | Mr Ashley Walker |
| Mr Nathan Jarro | Mr Peter Dawson |
| Ms Gina Masterton | Ms Melinda Mitchell |
| Mr Jason Briggs | Ms Danielle Davis |
| Ms June Kenny | Mr Corey Smith |
| Mr Matthew Karakoulakis | Ms Samara Hand |
| Ms Tammy Williams | Ms Laura Vincent |
| Ms Corina Martin | Ms Alison Boland |
| Ms Leanne Liddle | Ms Tamara Kenny |
| Mr Terrence Stedman | Ms Mikaela French |
| Mr Bruce Rudeforth | Ms Tayla Anderson |
| Ms Stephanie Bott | Ms Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts |
| Ms Rebecca Martin | Mr Noah Bedford |
| Ms Peta MacGillivray | Ms Sophie Coffin |
| Ms Hannah Dawson | Mr Cameron Downey |
| Ms Merinda Dutton | Ms Michelle Burchill |
| Ms Krista McMeeken | Ms Sharleigh Crittenden |
| Ms Aurora Milroy | Mr Corey Blyth |

2025 Scholarship

Eligibility and Selection Criteria

To be considered for this Scholarship, applicants must:

- Be in either their penultimate or final year of law school.
- Be of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent, identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and be accepted as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander by the community in which they live, or formerly lived.
- Provide a one-page statement outlining their aspirations, reasons for studying law and objectives upon completion of law school.
- Provide a curriculum vitae (no more than three pages) including the names, addresses and telephone numbers of two referees.
- Provide a copy of their latest academic transcript outlining their tertiary results.
- Provide information regarding their involvement in the community (including but not limited to First Nations communities) and/or extra-curricular activities.

Information for Applicants

The scholarship will be awarded at the Law Council's annual Gala Dinner on the advice of the selection committee

The selection committee will determine the successful recipient by considering each applicant's academic performance, extra-curricular activities, community involvement and referees.

The scholarship will **not** be awarded to an applicant who already holds any other Australian bursary or scholarship.

The selection committee is constituted by a sub-committee of the Law Council's Indigenous Legal Issues Committee.

The recipient will be invited to the Law Council's annual Gala Dinner, along with one family member or friend to receive the Scholarship.

The Scholarship will offer applicants a one-off scholarship valued at \$9,000

The scholarship may be sought for part-time study or full-time study.

The scholarship will be paid direct to the student.

Part-time students may receive part payments (pro-rata) depending on the number of units studied. Payments will not be related to, or affected by, an ABSTUDY

benefit received by successful applicants. However, cash payments will be counted as income in determining ABSTUDY eligibility.

A successful recipient will receive or benefit from scholarship payments without application of any means test.

The scholarship may not be awarded if the selection committee believes there is no applicant of sufficient merit.

The Scholarship will offer the recipient an opportunity for mentorship from legal professionals

The recipient will be provided with the opportunity to receive mentorship from individuals or organisations within the legal profession. This could include 1:1 mentoring, shadowing a legal professional, attending hearings/meetings and invitations to networking events.

Final Checklist for Applicants

Applicants must provide the following documents as part of their application:

- A Curriculum Vitae (no more than three pages) including the names, addresses and telephone numbers of two referees.
- Academic transcript including latest tertiary results.
- A document confirming community recognition of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.
- One-page statement outlining their aspirations, reasons for studying law and objectives upon completion of law school.
- Signed Application form.

Applications close 16 September 2024

For more information contact:

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T. 02 6246 3788**

The John Koowarta Reconciliation Law Scholarship
is proudly administered and supported
by the Law Council of Australia.

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