

# Engaging School Students: First Peoples Aspirations to Health Program

The First Peoples Aspirations to Health Program is an example of an initiative designed to raise awareness about career pathways in health, that is specifically targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Set up by Griffith University's First Peoples Health Unit (FPHU) and Connect 'n' Grow, the program initially targeted students from around Queensland, however more recently the focus was shifted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the university's catchment area of South East Queensland. Students studying a Certificate II in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health who have shown an ability to complete higher learning are invited to attend a week-long summer camp. By exposing the students to life on campus the FPHU hopes to make the prospect of attending university less daunting for students and to strengthen their beliefs that they can make it to university and succeed. During their visit, students attend nursing, midwifery, dentistry and sports medicine workshops, and are taken on a tour of the Gold Coast University Hospital.

The initiative has been pivotal in providing improved awareness of careers in health. To date, 78 students have completed the program. Of these, 85% expressed an interest in studying at university post-camp. This figure is significantly higher than pre-camp, where only 37% of students expressed an interest in going to university. Eleven students are known to have gone on to attend Griffith University in a health-related degree and at least 15 students have applied to study at other universities.

The program is funded by Griffith University and the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, via the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Programme.

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