Law Council
OF AUSTRALIA

2027 John Koowarta Reconciliation

LAW SCHOLARSHIP

Closing date: 7 August 2026

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 of 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

Tiarna Williams

The 2026 John Koowarta Reconciliation Law Scholarship was awarded to University of Wollongong student and proud Dharawal-Awabakal woman, Tiarna Williams.

Ms Williams is currently studying a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of International Studies. When she completes her law degree, she intends to complete her practical legal training and then commence a Master of Laws specialising in human rights law and policy.

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:

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

2027 Scholarship

Eligibility and Selection Criteria

To be considered for this Scholarship, applicants must:

- Be in either their penultimate or final year of 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 (in the 2027 academic year).
- Be of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander decent, 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 payment 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.

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 7 August 2026

For more information contact:

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

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