



AAL First Nations Scholar 2022 has a passion for justice

At just 24 years of age, Lillian Ireland has already amassed an impressive range of achievements.

The proud Melukerdee woman from Cygnet near Hobart is in the final year of her combined Law and Science degree at the ANU in Canberra with an above distinction average across all her subjects.

She describes herself as passionate about Criminal Law and Environmental Law and hopes to eventually use both in her work:

“My goal is to use the law as a tool to advance the rights of First Nations peoples. I would like to start practising as a criminal lawyer and then hopefully combine this experience with my passion to protect Country, enhancing the essential role of First Nations laws and peoples in both these areas.”

It’s this goal which drives Lillian’s determination to maximise her practical legal experience while she studies, through both paid and volunteer work.

This includes work as a researcher with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, as an admin officer with the Aboriginal Legal Service and as a volunteer with Legal Aid.

She also worked as Associate to ACT Magistrate Louise Taylor and currently, she is Associate to Acting Justice Richard Refshauge of the ACT Drug and Alcohol Court.

It was her myriad achievements and obvious passion for her work which made Lillian the stand-out applicant for the Australian Academy of Law’s 2022 First Nations Scholarship.

The \$5000 award is designed to help a student in the often arduous final year of law study with both funding and an AAL Fellow as a mentor for that period.

The scholarship is in its second year and is made possible by the generosity of donors to the Academy’s Public Fund.

Last year’s recipient, [Mikeyli Hendry](#) says the AAL scholarship helped her complete the final year of her Bachelor of Laws without the financial stress which often impacts Indigenous university students:

“In addition, the opportunity to have a mentor made me feel genuinely supported by the Australian Academy of Law in much more than a financial sense. Once I complete my Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (GDLP) later this year, I aim to practise as a solicitor, advocating for Indigenous people in the areas of criminal law, family law or native title.”

The chair of this year's judging panel*, AAL Fellow Professor Gino Dal Pont says Lillian Ireland's obvious commitment to both legal study and work experience swayed the judges:

"Beyond Lillian's strong academic record across both her Law and Science subjects, what impressed the Panel included her extracurricular experience as a researcher and judicial associate, coupled with her ambition in future to pursue legal practice in community legal centres as well as to use her knowledge and skills to target environmental and cultural causes."

Lillian says the scholarship means she can fast-track getting started:

"I am grateful for the AAL assistance because it's financially empowering. It will help me to undertake my GDLP and qualify as a lawyer as soon as possible. I am keen to start using my legal qualifications to work towards Justice for First Nations Peoples and Country."

Lillian's mentors are Justice Rachel Pepper of the NSW Land and Environment Court and Lorana Bartels, Professor of Criminology, ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods.

Ends

*The other members of the AAL panel were The Hon Alan Robertson SC (AAL President), The Hon Kevin Lindgren AM, QC, and Stephen McDonald SC

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