

Monday, 5 March 2018

Proud Bundjalung woman overcomes adversity, receives Indigenous law scholarship

University of New South Wales law student, Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts, has been awarded the Law Council of Australia's 2018 John Koowarta Scholarship.

The prestigious award is the only national scholarship dedicated to helping Indigenous law students achieve their ambition of becoming a lawyer.

The award honours John Koowarta, a Winychanam Elder, who pioneered Aboriginal land rights in Australia during the late 1970's and early 1980's.

Law Council President, Morry Bailes, said Vanessa is an outstanding candidate and is well deserving of this award.

"Ms Turnbull-Roberts is a passionate young woman who strives to empower growth, determination, leadership and promotes the wellbeing of Indigenous people," Mr Bailes said.

"She is a remarkable individual, with an exciting and bright future ahead of her."

At the age of 11, Vanessa was placed in out-of-home care and used her personal experience as a driver for her motivation to study law.

"My life has encompassed many challenges and adversities, which has driven me to where I am today," Ms Turnbull-Roberts said.

"After losing my father last October, and then a few days later my mother, I am grateful for the significant strength and resilience that is entrenched within me to complete my degree."

While completing her Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Social Work, Vanessa has remained an active member of her community. She has worked alongside Grandmothers of forced removals, and F.I.R.E to change the conversation for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people around issues that arise from colonialism.

Vanessa seeks a career in child protection, juvenile justice and law reform that supports Indigenous people, youth, asylum seekers and refugees.

"I aim to combine policy and direct practice in order to develop programs that enhance empowerment within Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities," Ms Turnbull-Roberts said.

"I am completing my degree for my parents, community, and family, and most importantly for all the old people who have walked before me and have fought for our rights - they have taken much larger steps in order for us to be where we are today, and as the next generation we will continue to as well."

"I proudly acknowledge the support of those around me, particularly the support of UNSW Law UNSW social work, the lecturers and all those who work behind the scenes supporting and advocating for Indigenous education."

Images available [here](#).

Patrick Pantano: Public Affairs
P 02 6246 3715
E Patrick.Pantano@lawcouncil.asn.au

Sonia Byrnes: Communications
P 0437 078 850
E Sonia.Byrnes@lawcouncil.asn.au

The Law Council of Australia is the national voice of the legal profession, promoting justice and the rule of law.