



FOR BETTER  
TOMORROWS



Dr Tracy Westerman  
Indigenous Psychology Scholarship Program

*An Initiative of The Westerman Jilya Institute For Indigenous Mental Health*

# FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW

**Dr Tracy Westerman**

***A Trailblazer in Aboriginal Mental Health***

**Dr Tracy Westerman** is a proud Nyamal woman. She has achieved national and international recognition for her work in Aboriginal mental health, cultural competency, and suicide prevention. This is despite coming from a background in which she had to undertake most of her high school subjects by Distance Education.

Early in her psychology studies she was shocked to realise that there was no Indigenous content in any of the curriculum and it was simply not addressing the needs of Aboriginal people.

This made her determined to change that for future generations. To this end, she founded Indigenous Psychological Services in 1998 and has spent two decades developing evidence-based approaches to reduce the burden of mental ill health for Aboriginal people.

Her message is ***“there is nothing we can’t achieve as Aboriginal people if we believe in ourselves”*** and her own list of impressive personal achievements is testament to this. Amongst many other accolades, in 2018, Dr Westerman was named Australian of the Year (WA); was inducted into the WA Women’s Hall of Fame and awarded Curtin University’s Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of her dedicated service to Indigenous mental health and suicide prevention. In 2020 she was named the winner of the Telstra Women’s Small Business Awards (WA).



As Dr Westerman says ***“it is my hope that my story is an inspiration to Indigenous people; to females; to those from remote and rural backgrounds; those without educational, financial or generational advantage, or simply those struggling with the voices around them of lowered expectations, that anything is possible through self belief.”***



# Dr Tracy Westerman Indigenous Psychology Scholarship Program

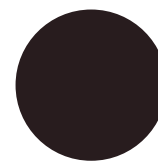
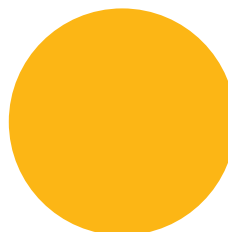
## Developing the Next Generation of Indigenous Psychologists

Dr Westerman launched the scholarship program in October 2018 by donating \$50,000 to address the significant gap between the needs of Indigenous communities and access to clinical and culturally skilled psychologists. The scholarship provides eligible psychology students with \$10,000 to help with study, living and transport costs, affording vital financial assistance at any stage of their undergraduate or postgraduate degree.

The scholarship preferences those who have remote and rural connections and/or who wish to work in remote and rural locations upon graduation.

Across Australia, Indigenous suicides occur at more than double the rate of non-Indigenous suicides, with our highest risk regions consistently and generationally being our most remote ones. Alarming, 30% of child deaths in Indigenous communities are by suicide. Dr Westerman believes that support for Aboriginal people suffering from mental health related illness that can lead to suicide needs to be guided by practitioners who have both clinical and cultural expertise and who are mentored around evidence-based best practice.

By eliminating the very real financial barrier for Aboriginal students to study, her scholarship program aims to facilitate the training of more Indigenous psychologists, skilled in Indigenous-specific mental health, suicide prevention and intervention programs, ultimately taking their experience back to the most disadvantaged, high-risk communities to facilitate real change.



*I could not be prouder to be Patron of the Dr Tracy Westerman Indigenous Psychology Scholarship Program. Tracy is a remarkable woman with an important vision – to reduce the alarming suicide rates in our rural and remote Indigenous communities, where children as young as 10 years of age are ending their own lives.*

*Since the program's official launch at Government House in 2019, we have already seen the impact that these scholarships have had on the inaugural five recipients, each studying a Bachelor of Psychology at Curtin University.*

*Through the program's support, the students have been able to focus on their studies and benefit from unique experiences including overseas exchanges. It is clear that their confidence has grown and their goals have been sharpened and, importantly, each is committed to using their knowledge of Aboriginal health in high risk communities in the future.*

*The Honourable Kim Beazley, AC  
Governor of Western Australia*



The first scholarships were awarded at Government House on May 28th, 2019 to five outstanding young Indigenous women with aspirations to follow in Dr Westerman's footsteps and make a difference in our highest risk communities.

Since then, the response to the scholarship has been significant and has enabled the expansion of it into other states. It has been incredible to see many organisations 'jumping on board' to assist such an obvious initiative that provides our best opportunity to address what has now become generationally the highest rates of child suicides in our own backyards.

*When asked what her dreams and aspirations for the scholarship were on SBS, National Indigenous TV, Dr Westerman made the comment that she wanted to "build an army" of Indigenous psychologists to address the needs of our highest risk communities. "I want hundreds and hundreds of Indigenous psychologists under this scholarship". Since then, the hashtag #BuildAnArmy has become synonymous with the scholarship, giving Dr Westerman many pride filled moments.*

All scholarship recipients have seen first-hand the struggles Indigenous people face, and they are all highly motivated to use their educational opportunities to effect change and reduce the high rates of mental ill health and suicide amongst Indigenous people.



## Inaugural Scholarship Recipients' Impact Statements:

### Nikki McKenzie

“It has always been a goal of mine to work in the Aboriginal mental health field and in a remote area. This goal stems from my upbringing in the remote town of Derby, where suicide was a common occurrence and unfortunately still is today. Once I obtain my degree, I plan to get employment either back in my home town or in another remote area, where the services are needed most.”



### Cheyenne Conway

“As I am a young Aboriginal person, I understand the social issues that Indigenous youth are faced with today, having seen it first-hand. With my degree, I hope to go into communities and help seek solutions for the problems the community faces by listening to the people and being their voice when they are not heard. I want to help solve the problems of suicide by being a trusted professional that is able to build strong relationships with at-risk kids.”

### Taylah

### Thompson-Patfield

“As an Aboriginal person, I know myself and my family’s overall health has been damaged and impacted from past and present trauma and therefore I have chosen to study psychology to better understand this. The Aboriginal concept of health involves not only the physical wellbeing of an individual, it can also involve the social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of the whole community.”



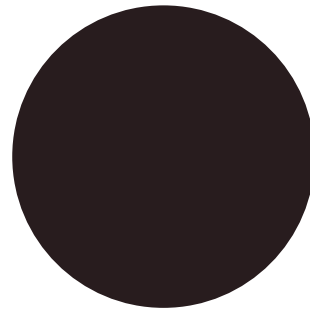
## Yasmin Hunter

“In the future, I intend to work in remote areas. My goal is to create awareness about mental health issues and addiction for people living in those areas. I would also like to play a big role in suicide prevention as the suicide rates in regional Australia are significantly higher than those in the cities. By studying psychology, I will be able to understand the ways to treat these issues and make a positive impact in regional and remote communities.”



## Rind Saira (Maheen)

“Growing up, I witnessed my grandmother suffer from depression and my mother and aunty suffering from anxiety. I understand how mental health can deeply impact an individual. With my Aboriginal background and future degree, I intend to help those in remote and rural areas by approaching them in a way that is respectful and understanding of different cultures.”



# EXPANDING OUR HORIZONS

## THE WESTERMAN JILYA INSTITUTE FOR INDIGENOUS MENTAL HEALTH

The next step is to build capacity to train not just Indigenous practitioners, but any practitioner who wants to be guided around the best possible practice to make a difference to the lives of our most vulnerable communities. To do this, Dr Westerman has established The Westerman Jilya Institute for Indigenous Mental Health, a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving how Australia responds to Indigenous Mental Health and enable the national expansion of the scholarship.

*Jilya has big aims, but we do not apologise for them, nor do we believe they are unattainable.*

Jilya means “my child” in Dr Westerman’s traditional language and sets the underlying vision for achieving better outcomes for Australia’s most vulnerable Aboriginal children, their families, and communities.

As a not-for-profit Aboriginal organisation registered through the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006, the Jilya Institute will hold and distribute scholarship funding, whilst drawing on the expertise of Indigenous Psychological Services (IPS) on a pro-bono capacity to mentor students and help drive cutting edge best practice research, treatment determination and training of practitioners across the areas of Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, Justice, Child Protection and Education.

## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The Dr Tracy Westerman Indigenous Psychology Scholarship Program will expand into South Australia in 2020, with scholarships available for students through the Jilya Institute, with Life Without Barriers, Kornar Winmil Yunti Aboriginal Corporation and Position Promo making significant scholarship commitments.

Discussions are ongoing for its expansion into other states. Information will be regularly updated on the Jilya website.

## Donations:

To ensure the longevity of the scholarship, the Jilya Institute is seeking donations to expand the scholarship across Australia to make a very real and tangible contribution to the future of young people in our most disadvantaged communities.

Join Dr Westerman and the Jilya Institute in creating a brighter future and more tomorrows for Indigenous people and communities across Australia. All donations are tax deductible.

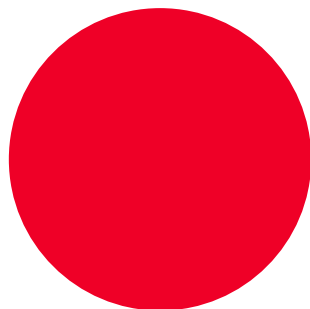
Donate today at [www.thejilyainstitute.com.au](http://www.thejilyainstitute.com.au)

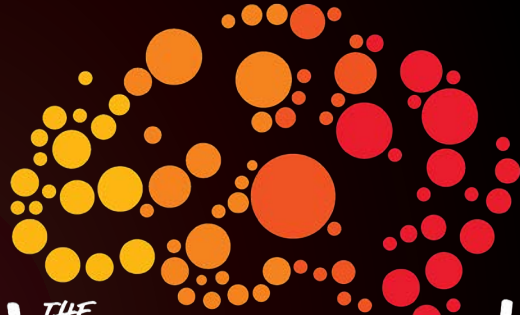
## Student Applications:

For further information or to apply for the scholarship, visit our website

[www.thejilyainstitute.com.au](http://www.thejilyainstitute.com.au)

Or email [admin@thejilyainstitute.com.au](mailto:admin@thejilyainstitute.com.au)





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