

Member awarded for Indigenous excellence

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“The power of education is immeasurable; it is what we do with this power that changes lives. This is why I do what I do,” said Federation member Kayla White, who has been recognised for her outstanding contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education with the 2020 Arthur Hamilton Award.

The award honours Arthur Hamilton who promoted cross-cultural awareness, recognition of Indigenous peoples and the elimination of racism within the Australian Education Union and in schools.

“Being a teacher is something I am very proud of. I love setting a good example for my children, nieces, nephews and community. I am proud to say that I, too, struggled in school with reading and writing, but look at me now.

“I think it is important for our youth to learn that your limitations do not define you. You can be anyone you want to be.”



Kayla, a proud member of the Biripai nation, began her career at Melville High School in 2010, working as the first Aboriginal School and Administrative Support Staff (SASS) member. While there she found herself drawn to the classroom and was inspired by conversations with the Aboriginal Education Officer at the school.

“Before I knew it, I was enrolled at the University of Sydney undertaking a Diploma in Aboriginal Education, which then turned into a Bachelor of Education, Aboriginal Studies.”

Now Kayla teaches at Camden Haven High School and is an executive member of the Hastings Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) as well as a regional AECG representative and a member of the NSW Teachers Federation Aboriginal Education Committee. She is a strong believer in the force of education to improve lives.

In addition to the Arthur Hamilton Award, Kayla has also received the 2018 Hastings Aboriginal Education Award and the 2019 Aboriginal Education Council/Prime 7 News Young Achiever Award.

She is committed to the Aboriginal community and juggles her teaching work with voluntary community work, supporting her family and studying for a Master of Education Leadership at the University of Sydney.

"I am hopeful that I will lead Aboriginal Education within my community one day soon.

"People often comment that I am a young teacher and have a lot to learn. But they overlook the 30 years' experience I have in my culture and my connection to local lands, in which I still live and teach.

"I am a proud Aboriginal woman, and my culture has always been at the forefront of my life."