

2024

**NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
HEALTH ACADEMY**

Australian Capital Territory

Graduation





NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH ACADEMY

GRADUATION AND AWARDS CELEBRATION 2024

Chairperson Welcome



Congratulations to the graduating students of the 2024 IAHA National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Academy.

We extend our appreciation to all graduate trainees for your courage, commitment, and dedication throughout your journey in completing the Academy Program, and it has been amazing to see your growth, development, and engagement in achieving your goals and aspirations.

As each of you embark on the next chapter of your own journey, we encourage you to continue to approach it with the same enthusiasm and confidence that you have shown within the Academy, and we look forward to staying connected and supporting you in whatever is next.

To our continuing trainees, we look forward to working with you into next year and celebrating your continued dedication to learning, your success and achievements at our 2024 graduation ceremonies.

We wish to express our gratitude to the families and carers who have consistently supported trainees throughout their education, training, and Academy years. Your unwavering support and encouragement have been critical to the success and achievements of all our young people here today.

We thank our training partners, host employers and our IAHA Group Training team for their important roles in supporting the culturally safe and responsive delivery of classroom and workplace learning, facilitating access to opportunities to explore trainees' interest in a diverse range of health pathways.

For IAHA, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Academy represents a truly Indigenous led and invaluable program providing our high school students the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills in allied health and Aboriginal health and wellbeing.

This is a program we're deeply committed to and honoured to be able to deliver in and with our communities.

2024 marks a milestone for the program nationally, with the largest graduating cohort yet, and with trainees completing the program across each of the five locations.

The IAHA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Academy is one initiative that IAHA is leading to grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce into the future and ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families, and communities have access to culturally responsive healthcare.

We sincerely thank you all for your contributions to the success of the program, and for your commitment to improving education, training, and employment outcomes for our young people in partnership with our communities.

Staying strong and connected together!

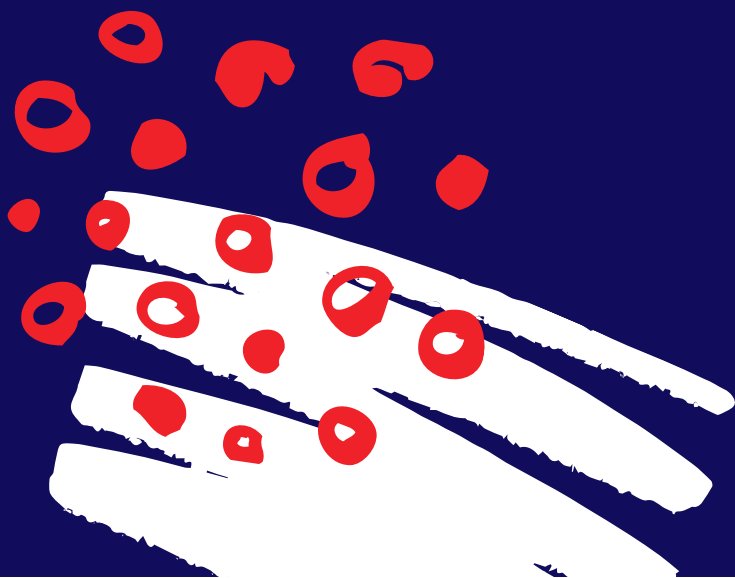
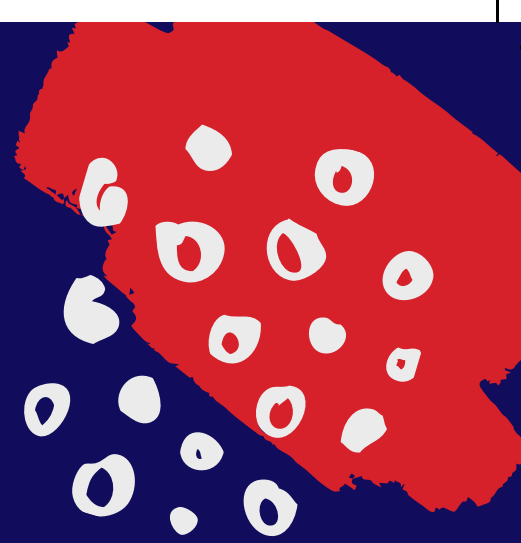
Nicole Turner

Chairperson

Indigenous Allied Health Australia

Program

- Soward Management Cultural Dancers
- Welcome to Country
- Opening Address by Paul Gibson
- Introduction to the Class of 2024 (Yr 11 & 12 students)
- Address from Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith
- Academy Overview
 - National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Academy
 - ACT Aboriginal Health Academy
 - Speeches from Academy Students
- Performance by Tahalianna
- Presentation of the Class of 2024 Year 12 Graduates
- ACT Aboriginal Health Academy Awards
- Closing Messages






ACT Aboriginal Health Academy Overview

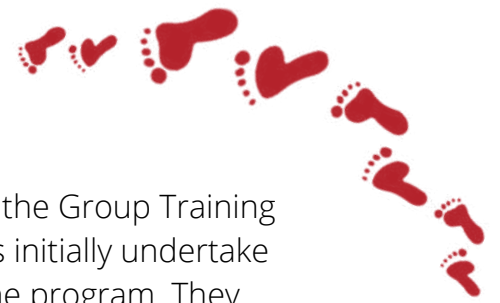
The IAHA ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Academy (ACT Health Academy) is an innovative, community-led learning model that re-shapes and re-designs how training and education are delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in high school.

The model is unique to other school-based apprenticeship programs as it embeds the centrality of culture, a holistic approach to health, and addresses the barriers that exist within mainstream education and training settings. IAHA works collaboratively across disciplines and organisational sectors (health, education and training, employment) to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school student engagement, retention, and successful completion of Year 12 along with a Certificate III qualification.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from the ACT and surrounding region undertake a fully supportive Australian School-based Apprenticeship (ASbA) which involves on-the-job and off-the job training in combination with regular attendance at school. The course is free, with no cost to the student or their family, trainees are provided with an income through an earn as you learn model, supporting their self-determination and resourcing.

Students in the ACT Health Academy attend 2 training days per week, one day at the workplace, and one day undertaking their Certificate III training. IAHA works in partnership with the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), our Registered Training Organisation, to deliver the training in a flexible, interactive, fun, and culturally safe way that caters to all learning styles.





The workplace component includes time spent with IAHA, as the Group Training Organisation (IAHA Group Training) and employer as trainees initially undertake work readiness training with IAHA in their first Semester of the program. They then transition into a clinical placement with one of our selected host employers.

Trainees are required to complete a minimum of 120 hours of a clinical placement as per their Certificate III requirements. IAHA Group Training find and match trainees with suitable host employers and once graduated from the program, assist them with transitioning into employment and/or further study. Our current host employers in the ACT include the University of Canberra Health Clinics and Canberra Health Services.

Other key strengths of the ACT Health Academy include:

- Instilling a sense of belonging and pride in community and culture.
- Ensure trainees have access to IAHA members, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models in health.
- Access to personal development and leadership and mentoring opportunities





Students, Schools and Host Employers

Student	Grade	School	Host Employers
Paige Fleming	12	Lake Tuggeranong College	University Canberra Health Hub
Laura Gasperski	12	Lake Ginninderra	Canberra Health Services
Yvette Lapworth	12	Melba Coplan	Canberra Health Services
Jaharn Mundy-Drazevich	12	Mackillop Catholic College	Fortis Physio
Tyson Russell	12	Queanbeyan High School	Canberra Health Services
Shanaya Williams-Schillings	12	Queanbeyan High School	University Canberra Health Hub
Jerome Allen	12	Karabar High School	The Social Connectors
Lawson Connor	12	Gungahlin College	Canberra Health Services
Mia Brookman	P/Time	Erindale college	
Imani Allen	11	Karabar High School	The Social Connectors
Kai Buchanan	11	Hawker College	Education ACT Gov
Kandice Denning	11	Lake Ginninderra	Cincotta Discount Chemist Dickson
Meliah Murray	11	Queanbeyan High School	University Canberra Health Hub
Tali Adams	11	Dickson College	Child Development Services
Siara Osei	11	Hawker College	Fortis Physio
Jayde Fleming	11	Erindale college	Canberra Health Services
Charlie Smith	11	Queanbeyan High School	The Social Connectors
Owen Golledge	11	Hawker College	Canberra Health Services
Makayla Mitchell	11	Lake Ginninderra	University Canberra Health Hub
Jayda Kilby	10	Amaroo high school	Fortis Physio

2024 Graduating Students

Paige Fleming

Shanaya Williams-Schillings

Laura Gasperski

Jerome Allen

Yvette Lapworth

Lawson Connor

Jaharn Mundy-Drazevich

Mia Brookman

Tyson Russell

Australian Capital Territory Aboriginal Health Academy Awards

Student Choice Award

Selected by their peers, the ACT Aboriginal Health Academy Student Choice Award recipient demonstrated growth, inspired others, displayed leadership, and worked with peers in a friendly and respectful way.

Trainee of the Year Award

The Trainee of the Year Award recipient demonstrates personal development and commitment aligned to IAHA's five impact statements: strength, connection, leadership, transformation, and growth. This award recognises a student who demonstrates cultural responsiveness, dedication, strength, and resilience.

Inspiration Award

The Inspiration Award recipient demonstrated the ability to inspire others through their positive approach to their personal and professional journey in the Academy – overcoming challenges and taking a strengths-based approach towards success. The award recognises the recipient's dedication to their studies, the IAHA National Academy program, and their ambitions for their future.

Future Health Leader

The Future Health Leader Award recipient demonstrated strong leadership capabilities, commitment to their studies, and qualities as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander role model and leader to fellow students, their families, and the broader community.



STUDENT PROFILES

Paige Fleming

My name is Paige Fleming. I am a proud Wiradjuri woman. My Family is from Newcastle, but I was born in Canberra. I joined IAHA ACT Health Academy in 2023, which was when I had just started year 11. I never liked school. IAHA gave me a different style of learning, and I thrived. I would have never imagined the opportunity that IAHA provided for me.



During my time with IAHA, I have had a great experience, from the learning to the support that they give you. The best part of the Academy is the friendships you make and what it's like to work in the health system.

My work placement was at the University of Canberra Hospital, where I assisted in helping the clients complete their therapy records for physiotherapy and occupational therapy. The things I enjoyed most about my placements were seeing the patients complete their goals and hearing their stories about what happened in their lives. I also liked getting some experience in a health setting.

The thing that motivates me the most is my mum. She is a nurse which is the reason I was motivated to pursue a career in health.

My dream for the future is to stay in health and to do future studies to become a nurse. Some advice that I would give to someone wanting to join the academy is to just give it a go it is an amazing program and a culturally safe environment, and it also has a great support system.



Laura Gasperski

My name is Laura Gasperski, and I am a proud Yuin woman of the South Coast NSW. I was born here on the lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people.

I joined the IAHA ACT Health Academy in 2023 when I was in year 11. Ever since I was younger, I've always wanted a career in health, but I wasn't exactly sure where in the health industry I wanted to work.



My experience with IAHA for the last two years has been very helpful and has given me a lot of learning experience as well as a practical overview of what it is like working in a healthcare setting. The best part of the academy would be making new friends and being able to connect with people sharing the same culture, as well as learning more about culture. IAHA has helped me become more confident in talking to people as well as improving my leadership skills.

My work placement was at Belconnen Community Health Centre; throughout my time at Belconnen Community Health Centre, I helped and observed in different Allied Health sectors: Physiotherapy in group sessions (LBP - Lower Back Pain) and (GLAD - Good Life With Arthritis). Occupational Therapy, Nutrition, Prosthetic and Orthotics, Nursing/Renal and Dentistry. Including a day at the University of Canberra Hospital: A tour, hydrotherapy, and the driving program offered at the University of Canberra.

After I complete my Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance, I will be continuing my studies in Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance. After I have completed both certificates I intend to pursue a career in health and hopefully work as an Allied Health Assistant in a health centre or hospital while I'm studying radiography.

My advice for someone wanting to join the Academy would be to have a go at the program, as IAHA will provide you with the support you need and opportunities for personal and professional development. Developing friendships that will go beyond IAHA.



Yvette Lapworth

My name is Yvette, and I am a proud Bundjalung and Darkinjung woman. I grew up in Tweed Heads on Bundjalung land, and in 2017, I moved to Ngunnawal country.

I have always had a strong interest in health and fitness, so when my school's careers advisor told me about the IAHA academy program at the beginning of year 11, I thought I would give it a go as it matched my interests.



During my time completing Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance, I have met many amazing people from my peers, supervisors, teachers, and the patients I have met on my placements. All of these people have been more than supporting and encouraging on my journey to completing this course.

I have been on three placements, which I have thoroughly enjoyed at UCH, TCH, and BCHC. I have tried my part in many different AHA roles, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, nutrition, hydrotherapy, dentistry, podiatry, speech therapy, nursing/renal, prosthetics, and orthotics.

A big part of my life has always been dance. For next year I have plans to study cultural dance while working as an AHA alongside. I would love for some time in the future to potentially do further study and pursue a career in Sports Physiotherapy to combine my two passions.

My time at IAHA has been very memorable, and I will forever be grateful for such an amazing experience. It has given me workplace experience, professionalism and given me skills that have prepared me for the workforce.



Jaharn Mundy-Drazevich



I'm a proud Ngunawall and Yuin man. My family connections are from Yass and at the Hollywood mission there, and also connections down at Jervis Bay and, more specifically, the mission at Wreck Bay. An interesting fact about me is I like to freestyle in the car while I'm driving!

I decided to join the academy because I had seen that IAHA was run by other Aboriginals, and so by knowing that, I felt really comfortable to enrol. I also had an interest in getting involved and working in the Health Sector to help other mob.

My experience with IAHA has honestly been the best time ever; I've made really, really good friends, some I even consider my brothers. So, knowing that being in IAHA has led to those great bonds has been awesome.

What I like most about the Academy is one, being with the friends I made and seeing them every week is really good, and two, just having the connection with Culture and learning more and more about what it means to be a black fulla.

Most of my placements have been more on the active side of health, so being an AHA in Exercise Physiology at UC Health Clinics or what I'm currently doing as an AHA in Sports Physio down at Fortis Physio, so being involved in more active stuff is really, really nice. I also done placement in the Education sector.

I'm actually going to be pursuing a career in the community service sector, more specifically, Youth Work; I've already started my journey in that as well and I'm enrolled at CIT, completing my Certificate III in Community Service.

One of my dreams/goals for my future is definitely working in Youth Work and hopefully having my own company by the next 10 years, but my end goal in life is honestly being an advocate for Suicide Prevention and Men's mental health, as it's really affected my whole family and me, so one of my true dreams is definitely being an Advocate for Suicide Prevention.

The advice I would give to someone who wants to join the academy in the future is to stay focused, keep working hard, and don't get discouraged if things get tough, as you'll always have that support around you from your peers and from IAHA as well.



Tyson Russell

I'm Tyson Russell, a proud man of the Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal peoples.

I am passionate about sports, and I thrive in cricket. I enjoy sports due to the teamwork and ability to get outdoors is involved, also relating to my enjoyment in the Allied Health environment, where

I am able to work with people to help others in need, which is something I also thoroughly enjoy doing. I haven't been certain about what my future holds for a while now. IAHA has given me that foot in the door to further explore my opportunities within the community. I was sceptical about joining the academy at first. Unsure about my study pattern and worrying that I may fall behind, with the support from all the staff at IAHA (and some influence from getting paid), I took the opportunity, and I haven't looked back since.



I had no idea what I was going to get out of the program other than a Certificate III in Allied Health. IAHA exceeded my expectations, and I have now always looked forward to a day with some of my closest friends. We get a good laugh while learning some vital information to jumpstart my career in the workplace.

Each of my rotations has been very unique in the way the different occupations require different skills, but they all come down to talking, which is something I'm definitely good at. From Neurophysiology and Exercise Physiology, to Occupational Therapy and Optometry, all these professions entail talking to the patients and motivating them to get their activities done to help better them, while I found it has really helped myself and develop as a person for the better in the process without really realising. It all starts coming as second nature.

Seeing the patients and everyone have a smile on their faces is so rewarding and really gravitates me to coming back. A career in health is definitely something I'm considering because of the impact the clients have. Another reason I found to apply for a job in Allied Health would be to "give back" for all my traumatic injuries and help people at what may be their lowest points in life as I was helped at mine.

Some advice I would give to someone who wants to join the academy at IAHA, as a lot of people would say, is just go for it! It's an opportunity to put that foot in the door, something to lean back on in a Certificate III and gain some experience in the workplace whilst being with some of the best people you'll meet. On top of that... getting paid! I couldn't be more thankful for the opportunities and support that this program gave me.



Shanaya Williams-Schillings



My name is Shanaya Williams-Schillings. I am a proud Kamilaroi and Anaiwan woman. My family is from Tamworth and Newcastle, but I was born in Newcastle. I am a year 12 student attending Queanbeyan High School.

My hobbies and interests are basketball, netball, travelling, and arts like painting. A fun fact about me is that I have represented NSW and Victoria in representative Basketball and Netball at the state level at nationals and played for NSW in the Patty Mills national competition at the end of last year.

I joined to experience what it's like in health and hopefully open my mind to a potential career pathway. The academy has broadened my knowledge of health in every area of allied health and has given me career pathways to pursue in the future after I finish my studies at high school.

IAHA has been such a wonderful experience for me to connect with my culture and meet new people and develop new friendships while learning about allied health. I've had so much fun learning and connecting with other Aboriginal kids around my age; it has been so amazing. The academy is fun, supportive and culturally safe.

I have really enjoyed my journey with IAHA in all my placements, helping people in my community and encouraging them to do the things they have to do to get better and recover to be back home with their families and friends while helping them achieve their goals.

The type of placements I have been placed at is in hospital settings, community health clinic and a university cancer clinic. I have spent time in a variety of allied health areas like nutrition, Occupation Therapy, Podiatry and Physiotherapy, both in a hospital ward's gym and clinical gyms. And I really enjoy my placement a lot. I enjoy helping people with their therapy programs and having a conversation with them.

What motivates me to pursue a career in health is being able to help people reach their goals and get better and live life again healthy and around family and friends. My goals for the future are to keep studying allied health and to become a physiotherapist or an Occupational Therapist.

My advice to anyone wanting to join the academy and try your best in this course and you will have a great time and develop good friendships and build a stronger connection with your aboriginal culture.



Lawson Connor

My name is Lawson Connor, a proud Wiradjuri man. From a young age, I was exposed to the healthcare system as I grew up with Epilepsy. I spent the majority of my childhood in and out of hospital and have always considered the healthcare system like a second home.



Because of my experiences in the hospital, I have always been inspired by the work of healthcare professionals. I knew that this would be my pathway, and here I am. I am currently a year 11 student completing a Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance, which isn't something I would have been able to do if it wasn't for all the support that's been provided to me through Indigenous Allied Health Australia and school along the way.

During my 2 years with IAHA (Indigenous Allied Health Australia), I have been fortunate enough to gain extremely valuable on-the-job experience through our 120 hours of mandatory placement. During my first year, I was on placement at the University of Canberra Specialist Rehabilitation Hospital, which was extremely eye-opening. It taught me the fundamental skills of communication, teamwork, integrity, and so much more, which have enabled me to progress with not only my career but also within my own day-to-day skills. This placement was extremely rewarding as I watched numerous patients progress from admission to discharge and being able to see someone improve physically was so special. This isn't something you are able to experience in every career and it's moments like these where I feel so extremely grateful to be a part of the IAHA Academy.

My ASbA journey has been so incredible. The learning experiences have genuinely been unforgettable, and the friendships I have gained will never be lost. I really enjoyed the way the training was delivered to us. It has a really good balance of both practical and theory which has worked really well for me and many others. The cultural training provided to us by IAHA has also been amazing; it's been really beneficial as I haven't had this type of training provided previously and it has enabled me to be a much better person.

I have been fortunate enough to be selected as a finalist for the ACT ASbA Student of the Year awards, which is such a great achievement for me and my family, who have provided me with unconditional support throughout my journey.

My absolute dream job is to be a Paramedic. I feel it would be such an honour to provide emergency healthcare within the community, especially a rural/remote community or a disadvantaged Indigenous community, as I would be able to provide a level of cultural care and understanding, which is a career goal for me.



Mia Brookman

My name is Mia Brookman, and I am Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal from Tumut, Brungle and Canberra. An interesting fact about me is that I am the second eldest of 8 children.



I joined the academy because my sister Djanaya participated in and completed the ACT IAHA Academy in 2022 and has now almost finished her second year of university. I would like to graduate from the IAHA program and get as much as I can out of it and have a future career in health like my sister.

I have loved my experience at IAHA, especially with all the support that has been given. There have been some challenges with staff changing, but everyone new who comes in is so welcoming, and the space is very culturally safe.

The thing I like the best about IAHA is the staff and student support. The academy space is much more comfortable and culturally safe than a school environment.

I had my first work placement at the Belconnen Community Health Centre (BCHC). I enjoyed my time working with different people with similar but very different diagnoses. Some days, I would be conducting and assisting with group class exercises, and other days, I would be out on home visits. The thing I liked most in the workplace would be all the different people you meet and the connections you make with them.

The thing that motivates me most to pursue a career in health is how rewarding the job is, knowing that you are helping someone to have a quality of life and be independent. No matter how hard your day is or what gets in front of you, even a medical emergency, you still go home with a smile on your face.

My goal in the future is to have some sort of role in healthcare. I am not too sure yet what I would like to do, but I am wanting to do further study.

My advice for someone wanting to join the ACT IAHA Academy is to do it. There are so many career opportunities that are out there when you have a cert III in Allied Health Assistance; you also get paid whilst completing your year 12 certificate.



Jerome Allen

My name is Jerome, and I am a proud Bundjalung man and I am in Yr 12 at Karabar High School.

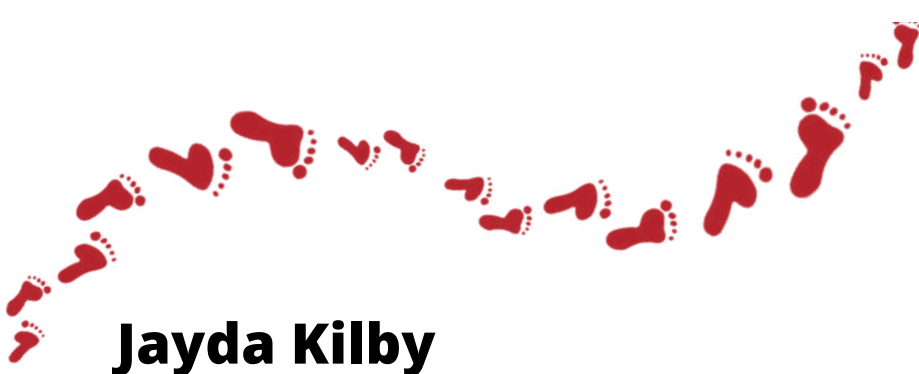


My interests are in sports, particularly in league and basketball.

I joined IAHA Academy last year for career opportunities.

I have enjoyed my experience with IAHA Academy for a variety of reasons. The teachers have been supportive and the students and staff are good people. I have made really good friendships. The workspace is also supportive, enjoyable and culturally safe.

Once I graduate from IAHA Academy, I will be continuing to work with The Social Connectors, who were my host employers, as they have offered me employment.



Jayda Kilby

I am a proud Wiradjuri and Ngemba woman. My parents and I are from Orange, which is in central NSW. I carry my grandmother's last name on my father's side (Kilby), and my grandfather was a Peckham. My father's family is from Dubbo, Wellington, Canberra, and Orange. On my mother's side, my grandmother's last name is Frail, and my grandfather's last name is Bowman. My mother's family is from Orange and Brewarrina, a small town located in Northwest NSW.



I am a very artistic person. I paint, crochet and draw. I started to crochet this year because I wanted to try something new and make myself clothes. I paint and draw for my culture. One way for me to stay connected to culture is by doing art and expressing myself how I feel about my everyday life.

I decided to join the academy because I wanted to start by doing good things in my life. Last year, I was barely going to school and getting into trouble a lot outside of school. I've been bullied for the majority of my life, and I wanted to show everyone that I'm stronger than everyone who put me down. I also wanted to try something new, as I never was sure what I wanted to do when I was older.

My experience with IAHA is going very well; the majority of the people there are nice, and all the teachers are very nice and supportive. The CIT work is very easy as our teacher is very good at explaining what we are doing. I've made a lot of connections with other people and gotten to meet new people during this experience.

I like that we get treated like adults and not kids. I also like that it is very independent work. I enjoy hanging out with my mates and that the work is very easy.

I got sports physiotherapy. It is very fun, and I am very happy I got to do sports therapy for my first placement. The supervisor is very nice. During free breaks, he lets my partner and I use the gym to play around with equipment and to also use equipment. The other workers there also helped us out by teaching us techniques and how to work on the correct muscles.

My biggest motivation is to make the percentages go up with Indigenous health workers, even if it's by a small number, as my people and culture are the biggest motivation for me. But the one person who motivates me is my mum; she's always pushing me to try new things that are good for my future.

My dreams and goals mean a lot to me, as I don't see them as impossible. One of my goals is to become a sports physiotherapist because I am a really sporty person and wanted to become a sportswoman when I was younger. I also want to be a role model to the community when I am older, as I want everyone to get treated fairly and tell them the wrongs and rights in life.

My advice to anyone interested in joining the Academy is it is very different from school, and it is a good thing as you are expected to act your age at work. You might think things are expected to be independent work, but it is a lot of group work, and the CIT teachers help out with work. Since it is a workspace unlike school you are expected to be appropriate and act your age during the classes.

Makayla Mitchell

My name is Makayla Mitchell, and I am deeply honoured to be a Wiradjuri woman from the beautiful lands of Bowral. My journey began on Wiradjuri soil, where I spent my early years immersed in the richness of our heritage.

After moving to Cootamundra, I continued to carry the strength of my people with me, and now, as I make my home on Ngunnawal land, I embrace each step of my path with pride and purpose. My connection to these lands and my heritage fuels my spirit and guides my way forward. At the start of 2024, I embarked on a transformative journey with the IAHA ACT Health Academy, driven by a lifelong passion to make a meaningful impact in healthcare.



From a young age, I felt a calling to contribute to the wellbeing of others, and my heart has always been set on the nursing profession. This dedication to caring for people is not just a career aspiration for me. It's a profound commitment to nurturing and healing that guides my every step. As I immerse myself in this path, I am fuelled by the hope and determination to make a difference in the lives of those I serve. The IAHA academy so far has been an amazing experience, it has taught me so much about allied health and what impacts it can have on individuals.

The Academy is dedicated to improving health outcomes for Indigenous Australians. This focus ensures that the education and training provided are culturally relevant and address the specific health challenges faced by Indigenous communities.

The Academy offers a range of programs and courses that cover various aspects of health care. This comprehensive training helps students and professionals gain a deep understanding of both general health practices and those tailored to Indigenous populations. The Academy promotes strong connections with Indigenous communities, ensuring that students understand and engage with real-world health issues and solutions. This community-oriented approach helps bridge gaps between health services and the people they serve. Lastly, the academy has brought me some amazing lifelong friends, which has been an amazing experience as well.

From a young age, I've been captivated by the idea of making a tangible difference in people's lives and pursuing a career in health has always been my way of turning that passion into action. My motivation stems from a combination of personal experiences and a deep-rooted desire to contribute to the wellbeing of others. Growing up, I witnessed the profound impact that compassionate and skilled healthcare professionals can have on individuals and their families. Whether it was through a family member's recovery journey or the support provided during a health crisis, these experiences left a lasting impression on me. I realised early on that I wanted to be part of a field where I could offer that same level of care, support, and hope to others.

Ultimately, my goal is to make a meaningful impact through my career in health, combining my personal experiences with my professional skills to provide compassionate and effective care.

The advice I would give to someone wanting to join the academy in the future would be, "Remember: it's perfectly okay to feel scared or uncertain about what lies ahead. Embrace your shyness; you don't have to have everything figured out. Simply be yourself and allow the journey to unfold as it will. Focus on enjoying the experience and making the most of each moment. This community is truly special, and the memories you create here will last a lifetime. Step into this adventure with an open heart, and let the magic happen!"



Kai Buchanan

My name is Kai Buchanan. I was born and raised in Canberra as a proud Kumai and Guntijamara man, with my family bloodline originating from Gippsland, Victoria. I currently attend Hawker College as a Year 11 student studying exercise science.



My first rotation of placement started at the beginning of Semester 2, 2024, when I was working as an occupational therapist (OT) at Headley Beare (HB). I have assisted in two different schools, helping children develop multiple gross and fine motor skills by guiding them through various activities.

When I'm in the office, I find resources for the sessions, such as meditation and dance videos, and also help create laminated materials.

When I first joined the IAHA Academy, I had the goal of pursuing a career in psychology, aiming to become a psychologist. However, after gaining many opportunities and experiences in different fields of health, I have shifted my interest to physiology, which I want to pursue further at university after college. Not only has IAHA helped me learn so much about what it takes to be an Allied Health Assistant (AHA), but I have also made many new friends and connections that I will cherish for life.

What encouraged me to work in the health field was not only seeing my mum as an Allied Health Assistant for several years, but also my desire to help my community in any way I can. Having IAHA as such a valuable pathway to help me follow my dreams has been amazing, and I am forever grateful.



Kandice Denning

My name is Kandice Denning and I am 17. My mob is from the Dharug nation up in the blue mountains in Sydney. I joined IAHA Academy at the start of 2024.



The academy interested me because I would like to do something in the health industry, my main goal in the health industry is physio. IAHA is a very supportive community with a lot of connections to different pathways, especially in the health industry, and better help your future.

What I have enjoyed most about the academy is the support the staff gives you, the opportunities of learning new things, along with developing new skills you learn through placement and CIT. Getting the chance to meet new people and building connections with your culture. Even though I only started 12 months ago, I have learnt a lot. Through the CIT training and starting off with the academy team first. I have only started placement one at a Chemist, having to go through a lot of personal challenges that have stopped me from being able to work. If 12 months ago me, I saw how far I have come and how much I have achieved in such little time, she would be so proud. 12 months ago I couldn't speak to people, I wouldn't have the friends I have now, my knowledge has increased so much. Doing this program has given me so much, so many opportunities and so many pathways into life.

The program will push you out of your comfort zone, but it will push you in the right direction and best way for you. This program has helped me do public speaking more and ask a lot more questions, knowing it is okay to struggle, but you will have the staff to pick back up. My outcome after this program is to be able to help out more people in the community, especially our mob, as there isn't a lot of support out there for them. I believe that if our community knows there's someone out there to listen and let them yarn about their issue, things will change a lot.

My advice to future students is that it is okay to start off scared and unsure, but trust the process and give the program time. The first few weeks are going to be tough, but you get comfortable with the group you're in, and you will build many bonds from this experience. Doing this program is gonna give you so many benefits in life and help you out so much.



Meliah Murray

My name is Meliah Murray; I am a proud Ngemba/Wiradjuri woman from Brewarrina and Cowra countries.



An interesting fun fact about me is that I love riding horses and have won many events at local and regional pony clubs. I also love playing netball; my favourite position is the goalkeeper.

I decided to join the academy because when they came to the school to explain their program, I felt drawn to this opportunity and found this interesting. I also thought this would be a great start to my career and development.

My experience with IAHA has been really positive; everyone is supportive, and it has made it easy for me to be a part of this program. I have also made some really good friendships and love working with the people at IAHA.

The best part about being in the Academy has been meeting new people and connecting with other Indigenous people, as well as exploring my career options within the health industry.

My first work placement was at the UC Health Hub. I had the opportunity to experience working in the physiotherapy area, specifically learning about supporting people with chronic diseases such as Parkinson's disease and people who have had strokes. I also worked in the optometrist area, where I learned how to cut the lenses for glasses, find the right strength of the lens and how to use some of the machines. I have really enjoyed the variety of learning and meeting other people, but most of all to see how I can help others in these areas.

I have chosen to pursue a career in health as I enjoy working with people and supporting others to be able to have a quality of life, especially after sustaining injuries and impacts of chronic diseases or medical conditions.

I aim to gain as much experience within the health industry and learn about the different types of physiotherapy. I hope to one day be able to become a physiotherapist for sporting injuries.

My advice that I would give to someone who wants to join the academy would be to take the opportunity, you will learn heaps, meet great people and be supported in a safe environment.



Tali Adams

My name is Tali Adams, and I'm a Birri Gubba woman from Juru Nation in Far North Queensland. My great grandfather's bloodlines also connect me to Thursday Island, making me a proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman.



I joined the IAHA (Indigenous Allied Health Australia) ACT Health Academy in 2024 as a Year 11 student who had just relocated to Canberra. IAHA has provided me with great privilege to explore the Allied Health sector, and expanded my opportunities for after school. Not only has IAHA provided me with valuable learning experiences, it has also paved the way for me to build strong connections in a foreign place. I am beyond grateful for the support I have received from the IAHA academy staff and CIT teachers throughout my journey. Their continuous encouragement, reassurance, kind presence and unwavering support have made this experience such a pleasure.

I started my first placement rotation in Semester 2 of 2024 at the Child Development Service (CDS) and Gungahlin Child and Family Centre (CFC). I participated in a Muslim women's group on Tuesday mornings at Gungahlin. My involvement in the group included helping in set up, pack up, connecting with the children, and communicating with the parents. This experience has made it clear to me that working with children is where I hope to go in the future. Tuesday afternoons I spent at CDS participating in making resources for the Physios, Occupational Therapists and Speech Pathologists.

In Term 4, I will be involved in Speech Pathology appointments and drop-in clinics with CDS. This is a great opportunity for me as Paediatric Speech Pathology has been a big interest of mine since I was little. I have always had a passion for working in the Health Sector. This area of work would be extremely rewarding, and I know it can/will have a great impact on the lives of others. Growing up with four sisters and a brother, all close in age, is what has influenced my enthusiasm for a career in early childhood development/education.

Through this program I hope to get an insight into what a career in Allied Health (particularly with young children) might look like. I hope to graduate from college with an early completion and go on to complete another certificate with the support of IAHA. I also hope to apply for further study at University after completing my certificate/s. My ASBA (Australian School-Based Apprenticeship) experience has been unforgettable. The journey with IAHA has enabled me to develop strong connections, genuine friendships, courage to keep trying, confidence, pride, and hope for the future. It's opened so many doors for me, and I am confident that it will continue to lead me to a successful future.



Jayde Fleming

My name is Jayde Fleming. I am a proud Wiradjuri Woman. My family is from Newcastle, and I was born there. I joined IAHA ACT Health Academy in 2024. I'm in year 11. My sister Paige does IAHA, and she is the reason I joined in the first place. She shares her experience with me by telling me how much she enjoys doing it.



During my time with IAHA, I am having a good experience and learning opportunities with the academy. The best part about IAHA would have to be all the activities you do with your group and the opportunities that are open to you when you start your placement.

My work placement is at North Canberra Hospital, where I am doing Occupational therapy. I help assist my supervisor in upper lymph therapy and help those who have hurt themselves go back into independent living.

The thing that motivates me the most is helping those in need with neurological issues such as ADHD, ASD, OCD, etc. Because I am a girl that struggles with a few of these neurological issues, and I know the struggles of going through life with these and how difficult it can be without support

My dream for the future is to stay in health. Some advice is to just have fun and to take all the opportunities you can.



Charlie Smith

My name is Charlie Smith. I'm a proud Wiradjuri man from Condoblin and grew up in Queanbeyan. I joined the academy this year to help better my future and learn more about the health area and my culture.



My current experience with IAHA has been great; it's been such a good learning opportunity for me and has really impacted me as a person. I've also made many friends who I'd consider close.

What I really like about being a part of the academy is how much of a safe learning environment it really is and how comfortable I can feel with my peers and other students. I think what motivates me is to just help Aboriginal people in the community and to really share around the knowledge I can further learn.

The advice I would give to other people who want to join the academy is to not be shame really put yourself out there, and try learn as much as you can because no ones here to judge. Everyone's here to become better versions of themselves.



Imani Allen

I am Imani and I am a proud Bundjalung woman. This term I transitioned to Year 12, at Karabar High School.



I recently got my P's and saved up to buy my first car. I love driving, and the new independence it has given me. I enjoy working so I can save and spend my money. I have had two jobs in the past year. I really love spending time with my family. I am the only girl out of 5 siblings. I enjoy fashion and viral makeup trends, spending time with my boyfriend and my mates.

I found out about IAHA Academy as my brother, Jerome, joined last year. I started in 2024 and have made some great new friendships. I am learning more about my culture, and I have got to have some great experiences with the group.

Once I graduate from IAHA I hope to continue working in the Allied Health disability space - I was recently offered a position as an Allied Health assistant at a disability service. I would love to study Speech Pathology, as there is such a huge unmet need in the Canberra area. My long-term goal is to offer Speech Pathology to Indigenous youth, and one day travel to WA and NT to deliver service free of charge.

I am looking forward to attending IAHA Academy next year.



Siara Osei

My name is Siara Osei, I'm a proud
Yuin girl in year 11 at Hawker College.



I enjoy so many different things but my favourite
things to do is, sing, cook, braid hair and hang out with my siblings.

I joined the IAHA Academy at the beginning of this year because it seemed like an
interesting path to take, I've always wanted to pursue something in health.

I am doing work placement at a Physio clinic, I like the environment and it's nice and
quiet. I have enjoyed learning what it would be like to be a physio as I never really
thought about it before.

I love being with IAHA because not only have I learnt and gained so much, I also have
made so many different connections with so many people.

After IAHA I hope to go on with a career helping kids with less opportunities succeed in
life, I would love to go into LSA work or case work.



Owen Golledge

My name is Owen, and I am a proud Dharug man in year 11 at Hawker college.



My hobbies or interests are movies, video games, basketball, and spending time with my friends

I joined IAHA Academy because it seemed like such a great opportunity for me to expand my knowledge and career options

I have loved my IAHA experience so far as I've gotten so much more out of it than I first thought, I've made new friends, found new interests, and found a cultural circle that I've never really had before

Once I graduate from IAHA Academy, I intend to further my studies in Allied Health and will likely pursue a career in physiotherapy, aged care, or something similar.



CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

Grow the local health and social services workforce!

IAHA Group Training is a leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Group Training Organisation (GTO) designed to create opportunities for growing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce across diverse industries. We're here to help you find the right Trainee or Apprentice to develop a successful career in the health and social services sectors.

We can provide stress-free solutions when you are looking to employ Trainees and Apprentices. We work with you to build a positive and strength-based partnership as we recognise the integral role you play in preparing the future workforce. By providing meaningful and industry-relevant learning opportunities, you will be contributing to the work-readiness and employability skills for them to jump-start their career.

We welcome your interest and would love to talk to you about how we can assist you.

Benefits as a Host Employer:

- Gain a Trainee or Apprentice with an industry-recognised certificate.
- Be supported by our dedicated staff who will screen, recruit and select the right Trainee or Apprentice for you.
- We will manage and coordinate administrative tasks such as Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations.
- We will provide ongoing 360 wrap-around support services, including cultural support, career coaching and mentoring.



To find out more information, contact us on
(02) 6285 1010 or email us at
grouptraining@iaha.com.au



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BECOME WORK READY

Find a fulfilling career and make a difference!

IAHA Group Training is a leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Group Training Organisation (GTO) designed to create opportunities for growing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce across diverse industries. We're here to help you find and guide your career in the health and social services sectors.

Traineeships and Apprenticeships provide industry knowledge as well as relevant work experience in your chosen health career – you can gain your industry-recognised qualification while you earn an income.

Choose to complete your training full-time, part-time or even at school.

We are here to help you get your employment off to the best possible start. We welcome your interest and would like an opportunity to talk to you about finding a fulfilling career.

Benefits as a Trainee/Apprentice:

- Gain an industry-recognised qualification.
- Be more confident in building your employability and leadership skills.
- Earn while you learn.
- Be work-ready by obtaining industry-relevant skills and experience.
- Be mentored and supported with wrap-around support by our dedicated staff.
- Tailor your training to meet your individualised needs that focus on success.



To find out more information, contact us on
(02) 6285 1010 or email us at
grouptraining@iaha.com.au



Find out more

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