

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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Riawunna reunion: a celebration of education and community

On her mother's side, Tasmanian-born Nekol Stuart belongs to the Yolngu people of East Arnhem Land. No-one in her immediate family has ever gained a university degree.

"There was one person in my family who did try university," Ms Stuart said, "but she didn't finish the course.

"That's part of what motivates me."

Hoping to make a change in her community, and to provide a positive example for her son Ashra, Nekol is currently in the second year of a Bachelor of Arts. It's a tough road for a young mother. Riawunna has been established for that very reason.

"Riawunna helps with accommodation, books, computer facilities and study space," Nekol said. "But mostly, it provides people. The community at Riawunna has become my home away from home."

To celebrate Riawunna, a reunion of past and present students and friends will be held on Friday 23 July 2010.

The Riawunna Centre offers Aboriginal Studies at the University of Tasmania. The program aims to develop a wide understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and societies as they have continued and adapted, from ancient times until the present day.

Meegan Davey, the Indigenous Higher Education Officer with Riawunna, said the centre is also committed to the support of Aboriginal students.

"We offer a bridging program that runs for Aboriginal students," Miss Davey said.

"It helps adult students to get back into the swing of studying again. We teach them skills such as how to write essays and how to manage their time. We want to prepare them for mainstream university.

"The third aspect of our work is community. We hold events for NAIDOC week and reconciliation week, for instance, to promote cross-cultural understanding, and to provide a prominent place within UTAS for Indigenous Australian values, traditions and discourses."

The Riawunna Centre reunion for past students, staff and friends will be held from **5.30pm on Friday 23 July 2010**, at Riawunna, which is part of the Faculty of Arts development at the main entry to the Newnham campus. Entertainment on the evening will feature the Pakana Kanaplila dancers.

For interviews prior to the reunion: Meegan Davey, Indigenous Higher Education Officer, Riawunna. Phone: (03) 6324 3491

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