



NEW SOUTH WALES
BAR ASSOCIATION

INDIGENOUS BARRISTERS' TRUST

Mentoring First Nations Students

THE MENTORING PROGRAM

The purpose of this mentoring program is to provide opportunities for barristers to share their wealth of professional and life experiences with New South Wales First Nations law students.

Objective

The Indigenous Barristers' Trust - The Mum Shirl Fund has established this program in close co-operation with a representative group of First Nations law students to enhance the experience of studying law and to provide an understanding of the way the legal profession works at a practical and personal level. Direct contact with barristers will expand the knowledge and networks of the students and provide an opportunity for the barrister to develop a relationship with the student for a substantial period. It is anticipated that with an increased understanding of the legal profession, some students will decide that coming to the Bar is a realistic career option. The program provides and fosters an environment for barristers and students to stay engaged and connected with the Indigenous Barristers' Trust, the New South Wales Bar Association and with each other.

Role of these Guidelines

These Mentoring Guidelines describe the program established by the Indigenous Barristers' Trust. They deal with the appropriate approach to be adopted by both mentors and students and the expectations they can reasonably have of each other. They provide guidance to both mentor and student on ways to achieve the most out of a mentoring relationship. The guidelines also outline the role of the Indigenous Barristers' Trust in managing the program.

Structure of program

Whilst there are expectations in relation to conduct and quality, the program takes account of the multiplicity of demands on the time of both mentors and students. As a consequence, the program allows mentors and students complete flexibility to choose the mode and frequency of communication to fit in with their individual schedules. The duration of the mentoring arrangement is also left entirely to the mentors and students. Generally, the mentoring process is completed when agreed objectives are achieved or by mutual agreement between the mentor and the student. It is anticipated that the minimum period would be for one academic year and may last the entire period of the student's course.

Mentors and Students

Mentors are members of the New South Wales Bar Association, with at least several years at the Bar who benefit students with valuable insights, advice and guidance in relation to the student's studies, career and other aspirations and provide information on the operation of the legal system and the legal profession.

A small group of two or three barristers may decide to share the mentoring relationship by dividing the time spent over a 12-month period. Ideally, this arrangement would work when all barristers were in the same Chambers. Students are First Nations law students drawn from all universities throughout New South Wales in their undergraduate studies.



Benefits for a Mentor

The benefits of being a mentor are various. They include:

- the satisfaction of putting back into the community through helping current First Nations students and nurturing the leaders of tomorrow
- opportunity to gain a heightened awareness, through the association with the student, of issues that are faced by First Nations law students and to support them in dealing with those issues
- the consolidation and furthering of your interpersonal and mentoring skills
- professional networking with other mentors through special events organised by the Indigenous Barristers' Trust and the New South Wales Bar Association for mentors and students
- recognition as an Ambassador by the Indigenous Barristers' Trust and the New South Wales Bar Association.

Benefits for a Student

The benefits of being a student in the mentoring program are numerous. They include:

- opportunities to explore career options and aspirations with experienced professionals
- advice and guidance on job application and presentation skills
- access to inside knowledge on the way the legal profession works, and more generally business, industry and government
- insightful information and advice on leadership, management and workplace relations
- access to the experiences of professionals for guidance in time management, communication, negotiation and networking skills.

What Mentoring is Not

It is important to stress that mentoring is not about:

- providing academic advice
- mentors presenting tutorials or conducting workshops
- personal counselling or life coaching that is not related to professional skills
- assistance with commercial activities or ventures.

The mentor should never provide any direct financial or other personal assistance to the student. Any student facing financial difficulties or other personal crisis should be referred to the Indigenous Barristers' Trust for confidential discussions and possible assistance. Paid employment is not part of the mentoring program. If a barrister starts employing a student, then the Trust should be notified immediately and the distinctions between the two different relationships of mentoring and employment confirmed.

Effective Mentoring

Effective mentoring involves the mentor and/or student:

- agreeing to the method, frequency and response time for communication
- fulfilling commitments or providing adequate notice of changes
- contacting the Indigenous Barristers' Trust with any concerns or discomfort
- listening with empathy, being objective and non-judgmental
- sharing experiences and learning from both successes and failures
- developing a professional relationship by being honest and respectful
- observing confidentiality and professional standards of behaviour and safety.

Some Dos and Don'ts of Being a Mentor

Do's

- ✓ Challenge, motivate, inspire and encourage
- ✓ Inform, advise and provide insights
- ✓ Be patient and build trust
- ✓ Offer alternative perspectives
- ✓ Encourage self-directed reflection, analysis and problem solving

Don'ts

- ✗ Simply provide solutions
- ✗ Assume responsibility for the student's career development
- ✗ Tutor or offer personal counselling
- ✗ Neglect agreed commitments without explanation

Some Dos and Don'ts of Being a Student

Do's

- ✓ Be proactive
- ✓ Question and reflect
- ✓ Communicate openly
- ✓ Be open-minded to opportunities, new experiences and different ideas
- ✓ Accept feedback and learn from it

Don'ts

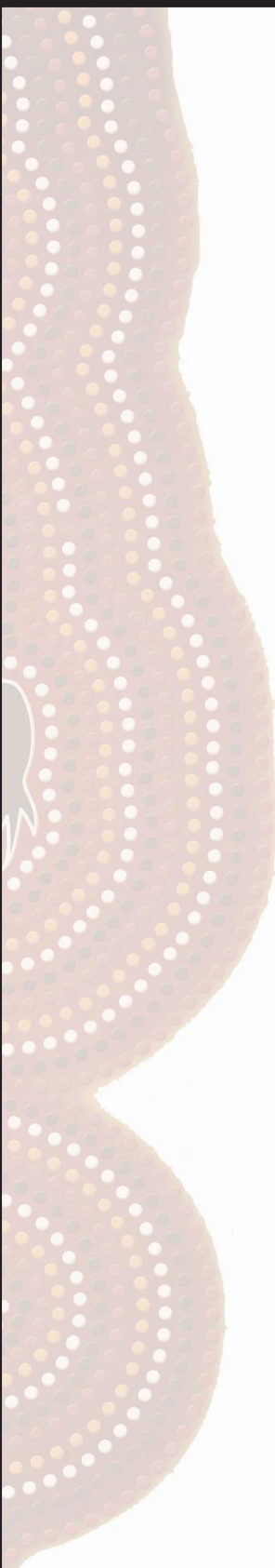
- ✗ Have unrealistic expectations (e.g. such as work experience, job offer, etc.)
- ✗ Have unrealistic time demands
- ✗ Neglect agreed commitments without explanation

How do I get started?

1. Persons wishing to be mentors or students should register for the mentoring program online using the registration form provided - the Student Registration Form or the Mentor Registration Form.

2. Once the registration form is completed, the Indigenous Barristers' Trust will conduct a matching exercise based on information provided in the registration form. This will include consideration of factors such as educational (discipline) background, career aspirations, common professional interests, time availability, and location where applicable. All effort will be made to match a student with a mentor who is best placed to assist. Potential participating students should note that their access to the mentoring program depends on the availability of mentors.

3. Mentors and students will be notified of their match. It is then the mentor's responsibility to contact the student to start the mentoring process. The Indigenous Barristers' Trust will provide the relevant contact details. Successful mentoring requires the 'right' relationship between a mentor and student. If for any reason, a mentor and student are unable to build the 'right' mentoring relationship, the Indigenous Barristers' Trust should be advised immediately by either or both persons and a re-match will take place.

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4. The Indigenous Barristers' Trust will monitor all mentoring arrangements and provide assistance where necessary.
 5. The mentoring process is completed once the mentor and student have achieved the mentoring objectives. It is the student's responsibility to inform the Indigenous Barristers' Trust at the conclusion of the mentoring process or at a minimum annually. Both the mentor and student will be asked to evaluate the mentoring program based on their experiences.

What if there are problems?

Anyone who experiences any uncertainty or discomfort with a mentoring relationship should contact the Indigenous Barristers' Trust immediately.

Mentors will not have any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in a student's business and vice versa. Any conflict of interest is to be declared. Mentors do not receive payment from students or the Indigenous Barristers' Trust.

Code of Conduct

The Indigenous Barristers' Trust expects mentors and students to adhere to the following Code of Conduct.

- Confidentiality is to be observed at all times, including all personal contact details
- Professional standards of behaviour and safety are to be maintained at all times
- Mentors and students are to treat each other with courtesy and respect and to be non-judgmental
- Mentors and students are to adhere to the [Best Practice Guidelines](#) (including the Model Harassment, Discrimination, Vilification and Victimisation Best Practice Guideline and the Model Bullying Best Practice Guideline)
- The fulfillment of all agreed commitments.

Role of the Indigenous Barristers' Trust

The Indigenous Barristers' Trust will:

- match mentors and students through a confidential process based on the information provided on the registration form
- ensure contact details and submitted information are treated confidentially according to the Indigenous Barristers' Trust privacy policy
- ensure mentors and students are aware of their roles and responsibilities before and during the mentoring relationship
- monitor all mentoring arrangements through regular contact with mentors and students and provide assistance where required
- be available for prompt advice and assistance when required
- deal with all matters referred to the Indigenous Barristers' Trust by mentors and students promptly
- organise events which provide mentors and students with the opportunity to meet each other and expand their network with other mentors and students.

For further information, contact mentoring@nswbar.asn.au or Chris Ronalds AO SC at ronalds@fjc.net.au