

My Future,
My Culture,
My Way.

NSW Department of Education



Case Study – Milan Hammond

Who am I?

I am Milan, a Wiradjuri woman who graduated from high school in 2021. I am currently studying Bio-medicine at the University of Newcastle and I have been selected by Perth Glory to play in the A-League Women.

I graduated from Hunter Sports High through a program called 'Big Picture', which allowed me to study subject areas of interest and apply to university by submitting a portfolio of the work. While this is a non-ATAR pathway, I was still able to successfully get accepted into the university course that I wanted.

By taking part in 'Big Picture', I was able to increase my attendance. It allowed me to focus on what I was interested in and passionate about – science and human physiology, personal development, health and physical education (PDHPE) and biology. This style of learning suited me. I overcame the challenges of being distracted in large classroom settings and moving to a different classroom each period.

I've always been passionate about sport

In Year 7, I was absolutely in love with soccer and, in my mind, soccer was my only career path. I also found the classroom environment challenging, I was easily distracted by my friends. But as I got older, I realised that I needed a back-up plan if soccer didn't work out. I decided to put a lot more effort into my studies.

I found a love of learning. 'Big Picture' catered to my learning style and passions, and I was able to focus on the topics that brought me joy. It was through 'Big Picture' that I was able to experience work placements. These placements were with a physiotherapist, radiologist and an exercise physiologist. Through these experiences I got a taste of what it would be like to be working in these professions, which helped to clarify my career aspirations.

Now I know, if soccer doesn't work out, I am working towards being a physiotherapist. I always saw physiotherapists on the bench helping anyone that got hurt. Seeing them help athletes has motivated me to want to learn more about how the body works and pursue a medical career.

Sport and the 'Big Picture' kept me motivated

I kept playing soccer though my final years of school and even though it was a juggle, it provided me the break from study and helped me to find balance in my life during that time.

Sometimes the juggle felt overwhelming, but my support network helped me to learn how to manage that stress. I learnt how to manage my commitments by being organised and managing my time.



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Aboriginal artwork created by Felicity Adams who is a proud descendant of the Kamilaroi people, currently living and learning on Dharug Country.



Milan at Hunter Sports High

The 'Big Picture' teachers were always there to provide guidance and help me to find opportunities like the work placements that would support my learning.

My soccer coaches were also familiar with the stress of managing school and sport, so they always made sure to check in with me to make sure that I was coping. The coaches also helped me to make my future decisions around continuing with sport and studying.

My connection to culture also motivated me

I was able to connect to culture at Hunter Sports High because they hosted a sister group for Aboriginal students, where we all came together to learn about our traditional culture, food and dances.

I felt a great sense of belonging in this group because it was a range of girls from Years 7 to 12 who all share the same culture. Because of this, it felt relaxing and welcoming to be a part of this circle and it was a way to unwind from the stress of studying.

The group was led by an amazing woman called Aunty Brooke who shared her stories about our culture that we were all able to learn from.

The school often invited me to participate in traditional dances and songs which also helped me to learn and connect to my culture.

Find your support system

You are never alone on this journey. There is always someone around you who is willing to listen and help you find solutions to your problems. Find your support person/people.

I found that the in teachers really want you to finish your HSC. They are there to support you and will help mentor you throughout your learning. Talk to your teammates and lean on your coaches for support. Connect to culture through your school or externally with your local AECG. And family, family will always rally around you.

Want to know more?

Visit My Future, My Culture, My Way, follow the NSW Department of Education on social media, talk to your school, or contact your local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).