

## **“Growing up” the Social Workers to work effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples**

In this presentation Dorothy Savage shares her experiences as a Traditional Owner of the Bindal people, social work educator, and community Elder in helping prepare social work students to work respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Dorothy will outline her experiences teaching a core second year subject to BSW and MSW students at James Cook University, a subject that also is available to other interested students as an elective. In particular, she will argue that social work students and graduates need to fully understand the huge impact of past colonization, the Stolen Generation and ongoing racism on Aboriginal families - by hearing it from local, grassroots people. Dorothy discusses the importance of building stronger working relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues, and draws on evidence from recent research that revealed significant racism experienced by Indigenous social students on their field placements. Dorothy also argues that social workers must be aware of the incredible strengths and resilience of Australia’s First Nation peoples in maintaining their cultural identity and storylines, considering the atrocities that are still occurring in today’s society.

### **Profile of Dorothy Savage**



**Dorothy Savage** is a proud Bindal and Biria woman from the Birrigubba Nation of Queensland. She is a Traditional Owner of the Townsville area. She also has South Sea Islander heritage. Dorothy has strong family values and cultural beliefs. Dorothy is currently employed as a Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Engagement Officer, based at the Townsville campus of JCU. Her employment at this university spans several years and her career background is in Education. She spent 27 years working with Education Queensland. Dorothy’s vision is to see more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people graduate and become Leaders in their own professional field. Dorothy believes that with a strong sense of Identity and belief in oneself, almost anything is possible to achieve.

Dorothy has been a long-term advocate of the social work program at JCU. She has taught into the social work program over many years, including as lecturer and tutor in WS2121: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Skills and Frameworks for Practice for 5 years. Dorothy has been involved in subject design and evaluation, including WS2121, and she is a member and Chair of the JCU Social Work Aboriginal and Torres Strait Advisory Committee. Dorothy has been a co-researcher on a number of research projects at JCU over the last decade, she has presented at key social work conferences and she is a published author of several social work publications.