

Lowitja O' Donoghue Excellence in Leadership - Public Sector Scholarship

Form Preview

Scholarship Application

About Lowitja O' Donoghue Foundation

Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation was established on 1 August 2022 to honour the 90th birthday of Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, and carries forward Dr O'Donoghue's legacy of courageous Aboriginal leadership, and her vision of empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to create meaningful change.

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue died on 4 February 2024, aged 91 years, on Kurna Country in Adelaide, South Australia.

About Lowitja Institute

Lowitja Institute is Australia's only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health research institute. Lowitja Institute proudly carries the name of its founding chairperson and co-patron, Yankunytjatjara woman the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG.

For almost 30 years, the Institute has worked for the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through high-impact quality research, knowledge exchange, and by supporting a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers.

Introduction

The Lowitja O'Donoghue Excellence in Leadership – Public Sector Scholarship supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals with substantive public sector experience to deepen leadership capacity, cultural authority and influence, strengthening capacity to drive reform and create positive outcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

The prestigious inaugural leadership initiative is offered and delivered nationally in 2026.

At the heart of the scholarship's establishment and delivery lies the enduring vision and legacy of Yankunytjatjara woman the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, whose lifelong advocacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, social justice, and human rights has inspired generations. Guided by her example, the initiative empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to continue Dr O'Donoghue's work of leading with, for, and through our communities.

"We must be fearless in our work for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. We must be fearless in our work for the Indigenous Peoples of the world over. Now is the time that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must take their rightful place at the heart of the nation"

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG

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Honouring Dr O'Donoghue and reflecting her pathway, the scholarship prioritises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership development and professional impact over formal academic study, recognising that influence is forged through action, service and lived experience.

The Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation will walk alongside the inaugural scholarship recipients and encourage them to draw on the courage, strength, and resilience that defined Dr O'Donoghue's life and work demonstrated through her courageous leadership and advocacy.

In the spirit of Dr O'Donoghue's pioneering approach, we encourage leadership pathways which support individual journeys, values, and aspirations, with the aim of high-impact and transformative change.

About the scholarship

This inaugural national scholarship exists because Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue spent her life proving that influence is not forged through credentials alone. The scholarship reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being, doing, and leading, providing genuine agency over individual development, rather than the requirement to fit into an existing mould.

Distinct from a traditional academic scholarship, this inaugural round will fund three recipients up to \$50,000 each to co-design their personalised 12-month leadership pathway plan that may include - mentoring, executive and governance training, on-Country learning, conference and exchange opportunities, or any combination of experiences that will deepen leadership capacity and create positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Supporting the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, this unique scholarship is integral to strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership pipeline and contributes to a broader national reform initiative - creating genuine, long-term impact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership across the Public Sector.

Where many programs ask applicants to prove they belong within someone else's system, the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation scholarship is built the other way around: Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation affirms its belief in the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, inviting them to step into a circle of courageous leadership. They will become inaugural members of the Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue Legacy Circle — a growing community of alumni from Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation programs demonstrating Blak Excellence in leadership and committed to carrying her legacy forward.

Privacy

We pledge to respect and uphold your rights to privacy protection under the [Australian Privacy Principles](#) (APPs) as established under the *Privacy Act 1988* and amended by the *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012*. To view our privacy statement, go to <https://www.lowitja.org.au/privacy-policy/>

Eligibility and Conflict of Interest

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* indicates a required field

Eligibility

Please confirm the following:

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- ☐ I am an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.
- ☐ I have confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity.
- ☐ I have substantive public sector experience in Health, Aboriginal Affairs, Education, and/or Human Services.
- ☐ I am seeking leadership development rather than a formal academic qualification and am willing to work with the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation to co-design a personalised 12-month pathway.
- ☐ I have the capacity to undertake and complete the scholarship over the 12-month period and expend the scholarship funding by 30th June 2027, should I be selected as a successful applicant.
- ☐ I have no outstanding reports, acquittals, or serious breaches related to any previous funding from Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation or Lowitja Institute.
- ☐ I have read and agree to the scholarship Terms and Conditions.
- ☐ I can provide an employment release form signed by my current employer, if applicable.
- ☐ If successful, I can provide relevant Working With Children Check and police clearance/s.

Note: all boxes must be checked in order to be considered eligible for this scholarship:

Conflict of interest

- ☐ I declare no conflict of interest in relation to this application
- ☐ I declare a potential conflict of interest

Potential conflict of interest declaration

Please complete this [Conflict of Interest Register](#) and upload it below.

Attach a file:

Financial support declaration

Have you applied for or received any other financial support for your proposed scholarship pathway?

- ☐ Yes, I have applied for other financial support
- ☐ Yes, I have been granted other financial support
- ☐ No, I do not have financial support
- ☐ No, I have not applied for other financial support
- ☐ Other:

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Provide details of other funding support you are currently receiving or have applied for (i.e. relevant to other scholarships and/or grants other than this initiative).

Attach evidence if applicable.

Attach a file:

Personal Details

** indicates a required field*

Applicant Details

Title

First Name

Last Name

Residential Address *

Address

Postal Address (if different from above)

Address

Remoteness Area

Date of Birth *

Phone number *

Email *

Please advise your preferred pronouns. *

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- ☐ He
- ☐ She
- ☐ They/them
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Other

Who are your mob/s? *

Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent

I can provide a formal certificate

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please upload certificate here.

Attach a file:

Employment details

** indicates a required field*

Current or most recent employer/agency. *

What is your current or most recent position/role? *

Sector *

- ☐ Health
- ☐ Aboriginal Affairs
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Human Services

Level of government *

- ☐ Commonwealth
- ☐ State/Territory
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ Statutory Authority
- ☐ Government-funded agency

How many years have you been in your current role? *

Must be a number.

Please provide to one decimal place

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How many years have you worked in the public sector? *

Must be a number.

Please provide to one decimal place

If you have recently spent time between roles, please provide details. *

Employment release form

Please complete the [employment release form](#) and upload it below.

Attach a file:

Not required if currently between roles.

Current resume/CV

Please upload a copy of your current resume/CV *

Attach a file:

Assessment criteria

*** indicates a required field**

Criteria 1: Public Sector Experience and Future Leadership Pathway (25%)

Describe your leadership experience within the public sector to date and your potential for growth *

Word count:

Must be no more than 300 words.

Outline a developed vision of a leadership pathway plan to be progressed through co-design with Lowitja O' Donoghue Foundation if successful. Well-considered details are encouraged. *

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Word count:
Must be no more than 500 words.

Criteria 2: Commitment to Community (15%)

Describe how you have demonstrated commitment within the public sector for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. *

Word count:
Must be no more than 300 words.

Criteria 3: Impact and Vision (15%)

Describe the life legacy you are driven to accomplish, the impact you hope to achieve through this scholarship, and your vision for your future leadership ambitions. *

Word count:
Must be no more than 300 words.

Criteria 4: Alignment with the Purpose and Beliefs of the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation (25%)

Purpose and beliefs are outlined in the [Lowitja O' Donoghue Foundation's Strategic Plan](#).

Describe and provide evidence how your goals align with the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation's purpose and beliefs, and Dr. Lowitja O'Donoghue's legacy. *

Word count:
Must be no more than 300 words.

Which of Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's achievements has had the greatest impact on your life and career, and how has it inspired you to follow in her footsteps? *

Word count:
Must be no more than 300 words.

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Criteria 5: Cultural Strength and Identity (20%)

Describe and provide evidence of how cultural strength, authority and identity inform your leadership. *

Word count:

Must be no more than 300 words.

Proposed scholarship expenditure

Expenditure

Please share with us your ideas regarding how you would spend the scholarship funding noting that for successful applicants, this may change subject to co-design of the successful scholarship pathway plan.

Expense description	Type Of Cost	Notes	Amount
			Must be a dollar amount.

References

* indicates a required field

References

Please attach **two** letters of support from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employer/manager/colleague, other professional associate or community peer, with brief comments against the selection criteria.

Letters from employers/managers should confirm your role and their support for your participation.

Referee 1

Referee name *

Title	First Name	Last Name

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Position *

Organisation *

Email *

Must be an email address.

Phone Number *

Must be an Australian phone number.

Relationship to applicant *

- ☐ Direct employer/manager
- ☐ Professional peer
- ☐ Community peer
- ☐ Other:

Please upload a letter of reference from this referee. *

Attach a file:

Referee 2

Referee name *

Title First Name Last Name

Position *

Organisation *

Email *

Must be an email address.

Phone Number *

Must be an Australian phone number.

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Relationship to applicant *

- ☐ Direct employer/manager
- ☐ Professional peer
- ☐ Community peer
- ☐ Other:

Please upload a letter of reference from this referee. *

Attach a file:

Application Declaration

* indicates a required field

I declare that the information supplied in this application is true and correct. I understand that it is a serious offence under the Criminal Code of the Australian Commonwealth to give misleading or false information and I acknowledge that Lowitja O' Donoghue Foundation reserves the right to reverse any decision made about my scholarship application funding if it is found that I have provided misleading or false information. *

Yes

Name *

Title First Name Last Name

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Date *

Must be a date.

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to submit this application.

If you have any questions or require further clarification please contact us at foundationscholarships@lowitja.org.au