SYDNEY

FOUNDATION



FIRST NATIONS ACADEMY

STRONG CULTURE.
STRONG COMMUNITY.
STRONG FUTURES.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Sydney Swans acknowledge the traditional owners of the country on which we walk, live, work and play.

We recognise their cultural and heritage beliefs are still important today.

We pay our respects to all Elders past, present and emerging.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Right now, too many talented First Nations young people never reach elite programs, not because of a lack of ability, but because the pathway is narrow and under-resourced. Without early identification, culturally safe development environments and sustained support, that talent is lost long before draft day.

As of April 2026, only one First Nations player is represented on each of our AFL and AFLW lists, and in the Sydney Swans history, only 21 male and 3 female players have represented the red and white.

By strengthening a genuine, long-term pipeline, you help ensure First Nations players are noticed earlier, supported properly and given every chance to progress from community football to elite programs. Your backing creates visibility where there has been exclusion, confidence where there has been doubt and belief where it matters most.

Why now? Because without action today, the gap widens tomorrow.



SYDNEY

ARA

FIRST NATIONS ACADEMY

IMPORTANCE & ALIGNMENT

THE NORTH STAR STRATEGY

The Sydney Swans First Nations Academy sits at the centre of our commitment to creating opportunity, strengthening community, and shaping future leaders - on and off the field.

BLOODS WAY VALUES

Guided by the Bloods values of **Respect**, **Courage** and **Curiosity**, the Academy is a place where young First Nations athletes feel seen, supported, and empowered to dream big. **This is about more than football.** It's about building confidence, nurturing identity, and ensuring every young person feels connected to something bigger than themselves.

As the philanthropic arm of the club, the Foundation exists to future-proof our programs and open doors for the next generation. Your support ensures this vision continues to grow.



"The ARA First Nations Academy gives young people the support, connection and cultural strength they need to believe in themselves and their future.

When we invest in these young people, we are backing their potential, their culture and the future leaders of our game and our communities."

MATTHEW PAVLICH
CEO, Sydney Swans

OUR AMBITION

We aspire to be the highest performing sporting club in Australia – enriching lives and improving daily.

Every young person deserves to feel safe, supported and confident in who they are and where they are going.

For First Nations young people, that opportunity is strongest when culture, community and education walk together.

With your support, the Sydney Swans First Nations Academy is creating pathways where culture, confidence and opportunity walk together for young First Nations people across NSW.

PLACE | CULTURE | PROGRAMS | COMMUNITY

TWO KEY GOALS OF THE FIRST NATIONS ACADEMY INCLUDE;

01

CREATE BROADER, MORE INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO THE ACADEMY FOR FIRST NATIONS YOUTH

- Ensure talented First Nations young people can access the Academy regardless of background or location, so opportunity is driven by potential, not circumstance.

02

SUPPORT ALL EXISTING AND FUTURE FIRST NATIONS PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROGRAM TO REACH THEIR OFF-FIELD POTENTIAL, BY;

- Celebrate and strengthen culture, helping participants build pride, confidence and a strong sense of identity.
- Cultivate the next generation of cultural leaders who will influence their communities and our club for years to come.
- Advance mental health awareness and resilience-building practices that set First Nations youth up for long-term wellbeing and success.

Too many First Nations young people face barriers that are not talent, effort or ambition based. Without consistent support, potential goes unrealised and confidence can be eroded at critical moments in a young person's journey.





THE IMPACT SO FAR

Since launching in 2022, the First Nations Academy has transformed what's possible for young athletes across NSW.

The First Nations Academy is not a moment in time. It is a pathway that wraps around young people as they grow, supporting them on the field, in the classroom and beyond school. Through connection, mentoring and opportunity, young people are supported to define success on their own terms.

These outcomes are possible because donors invest in programs that stay with young people through their most formative years, not just for one season, but for the long term.



First Nations representation in the QBE Academy has grown from 7 participants to

90

since its inception.

400+

More than 400 athletes are supported annually across the First Nations Academy program.



Proven Pathways

Graduates including Emily Hollingsworth and Myla Tucker have continued their football journeys from the ARA First Nations Academy into the QBE Sydney Swans Academy, showcasing the impact of a connected and supportive pathway.





"Jordan loves his AFL but I haven't ever seen him as happy as when he's training and playing with his mob, he has come out of this a better AFL player and person. A truly life changing experience and one we are so grateful he was able to be involved in."

ARA FIRST NATIONS FOUNDATIONS PLAYER PARENT

PILLAR #1
PLACE

Access, connection and opportunity close to home

THE NEED

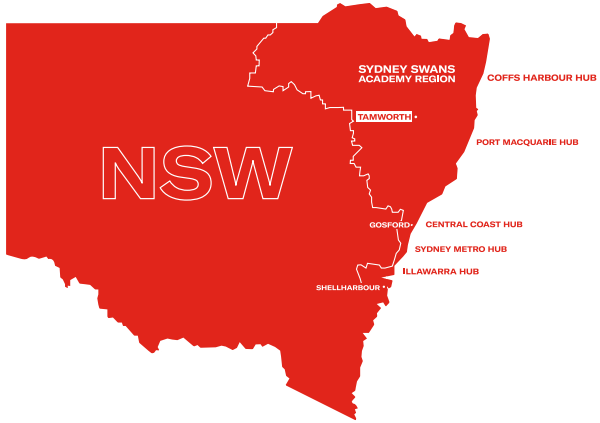
Geography and distance too often limit access to elite development opportunities for First Nations young people across NSW.

THE RESPONSE

Through a growing network of regional hubs, currently operating across five locations and expanding to Tamworth in 2026, we bring opportunity closer to home while maintaining strong connections to culture, community and family.

THE CHANGE CREATED

With your support, more young people can access high-quality development without leaving their communities too early, strengthening participation, retention and long-term outcomes across the state, reaching a region where First Nations youth represent over 20% of the local 10–17 age bracket.





PILLAR #2
CULTURE

Red dirt to red and white: grounding athletes in culture, pride and purpose

THE NEED

Connection to culture is integral to the development of the whole person.

THE RESPONSE

We have established the annual Red Centre Tour where athletes travel to Alice Springs and Uluru for a cultural development tour, playing matches on red dirt with the Mutitjulu community, blending AFL with cultural exchanges and experiences.

THE CHANGE CREATED

"I have learnt how much more involved they are in their culture and how it's a part of their everyday life which I hope I can bring back to mine."

Grace Morris, QBE Sydney Swans Academy talent speaking after attending the tour of the Red Centre in July 2026.



PILLAR #3
PROGRAMS

Practical learning, cultural strength and purpose-driven pathways

THE NEED

An education module designed for First Nations people, for First Nations people.

THE RESPONSE

We have developed the Academy+ education stream delivered online through one module per month from February to September. It supports lifelong learning and equips participants with practical tools to create meaning and impact on and off the field.

THE CHANGE CREATED

- Self-determination, led by First Nations voices and perspectives
- Ongoing social and emotional wellbeing education and support
- Extra learning and guidance beyond the game, including life skills, pathways and a sense of purpose
- a wholistic focus that supports athletes to thrive on and off the field
- Stronger cultural connection through content that affirms identity
- Mentoring and guidance from trusted role models



PILLAR #4
COMMUNITY

Wrap-around support so no one is left behind

THE NEED

Financial pressure and logistical barriers can derail even the most talented young athletes and place significant strain on families.

THE RESPONSE

We are establishing a dedicated Hardship Fund that provides personalised, wrap-around support for families, including travel assistance, equipment and essential costs, recognising that supporting the athlete means supporting the whole family.

THE CHANGE CREATED

Your support ensures families can stay connected, young people can focus on their development, and talent is never lost due to circumstance, creating stability during the most critical years of growth. Support addresses the need for personalised support for families to navigate the challenges of elite sport, removing barriers so young people can belong, grow and thrive.



CONNECTION AND PRIDE IN ACTION

SYDNEY CULTURAL CAMP

Connection, belonging and shared identity

Each year, First Nations boys and girls aged 11 to 18 travel from six Academy hubs across New South Wales, including Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, the Central Coast, Sydney, Shellharbour and Tamworth, to come together for the Sydney Cultural Camp.

For many participants, this is the first time they meet teammates, coaches and other young people walking a similar journey. Through shared cultural activities, yarning and time spent together, participants build connection, confidence and a sense of belonging that extends well beyond football.

The camp plays a critical role in bringing the Academy community together. It allows young people to find common ground, form friendships and take those connection points into games, training and the wider Academy experience. Most importantly, it reinforces that they are not alone, they belong to something bigger, and they are supported throughout their journey.

RED CENTRE TOUR

Culture, learning and pride on Country

The Red Centre Tour offers a deeply immersive cultural experience that connects participants to Country, community and tradition. Travelling to Alice Springs, athletes take part in competitive games and experience Marngrook, the traditional First Nations game that inspired Australian Rules football.

Through time spent with the Mutitjulu community, participants learn directly from Elders and community members, gaining a deeper understanding of culture, history and responsibility. These moments are powerful, grounding and transformative, fostering pride in identity and respect for culture.

The tour is more than an elite sporting opportunity. It is a chance for young people to strengthen their cultural knowledge, build resilience and develop a strong sense of self. For many participants, it becomes a defining experience that shapes how they see themselves, their culture and their future.





WHERE YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Align your giving with the impact you care most about.

The Foundation welcome tax-deductible donations, large or small, through the following opportunities

$50,000

CULTURAL CONNECTION AND BELONGING

Funds immersive experiences such as the Red Centre Trip for 15 players

Helping young people strengthen identity, resilience and pride through connection to culture and community.

$20,000

THE HARDSHIP FUND

Provides an essential safety net

So every athlete has access to boots, travel and training gear, regardless of financial background.

$5,000+

SUPPORT THE ONGOING EXCELLENCE OF THE FIRST NATIONS PROGRAM

Provides essential annual funding for the program to be delivered

$2,000

Donate to be part of a player's future



"It's been one of the greatest gifts of my life to have worked with her for the last 10 years. I've watched her grow and battle more challenges than anyone can imagine. The time and love they (the Sydney Swans team) showed her has transformed her".

CHRIS

Coach, ARA First Nations Academy, on the cultural camp in Sydney

AN INVITATION TO BE PART OF THE JOURNEY

Your generosity turns possibility into reality.

Every gift helps ensure First Nations young people are supported, connected and never navigating these years alone.

Your support ensures First Nations young people are not navigating these years alone. It provides stability, trusted mentors and opportunities that extend well beyond sport, shaping futures for years to come.

We invite you to play a role in shaping the next generation of leaders – on the field and in the community.





CONNECT WITH US

We would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about how your support could make a difference.



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