

## **Uncle Bill O'Brien OAM**

### **Citation for the Conferral of Order of the Companion of the University**

Mr William 'Uncle Bill' O'Brien OAM has worked tirelessly to advance the knowledge and understanding of, and engagement with, the Biripi people of Australia, the local community and Charles Sturt University. He has been an outstanding advocate for, and supporter of, Charles Sturt University since it was first suggested that a Port Macquarie Campus be established.

Uncle Bill has consistently tackled the challenging issues of indigenous welfare and equity in educational outcomes for Indigenous people. His broad knowledge, experience and unwavering effort has, time and again, been recognised and valued by New South Wales and Commonwealth Government agencies alike. In 2008, in recognition of his advocacy for Indigenous welfare issues, Uncle Bill received one of the Hastings regions greatest honours, and was named Citizen of the Year. In 2017 Uncle Bill was further honoured by being awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition for service to the Indigenous community of northern NSW.

Uncle Bill is unstinting in giving his time to advance local initiatives and serve the local community and is involved in community activities almost every day of the week. His lengthy list of community involvement spans the fields of health, education (from pre-school to university), sport, youth, respite day care and national parks. A member of the Biripi and Bunyah Aboriginal Land councils, Uncle Bill also is a member of the North Coast Area Health Service's Community Advisory Committee, Hastings-Macleay Community Transport and Partnership in Aboriginal Care.

Uncle Bill engages with all aspects of life on the mid-north Coast; including with local MP's and Port Macquarie Hastings Council, to provide advice and influence. Educating and sharing stories with visitors to the area is also a keen interest, and Uncle Bill regularly gives tours and talks at various locations. He freely shares his cultural knowledge and stories with all.

Uncle Bill's Welcome to Country speeches precede the majority of civic and Charles Sturt events in Port Macquarie and surrounding areas, giving them the blessing of the land's traditional owners. His Welcome to Country mixes the Biripi language with English to welcome you and, in doing so, Uncle Bill asks you to respect the ocean, land, rivers and other natural delights as this respect ensures the health of our country and its people. He consistently stresses the need to "get the best education you can" as the way to ensure success and sustainability, not only of Indigenous communities, but of all communities.

Uncle Bill is heavily involved in supporting and mentoring Indigenous students and staff at the Charles Sturt Port Macquarie Campus. He has been an integral part of the Charles Sturt University Port Macquarie Campus Regional Consultative Committee.

Uncle Bill's approach has been to work not only with Charles Sturt but across all other government and community organisations. His passion and commitment to children and young people, our Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and to Charles Sturt's inclusion and importance in training and education to provide a better future for all in regional Australia is unwavering.

Uncle Bill's approach is one of thoughtful consideration, absolute ethical integrity and a commitment to delivering appropriate and useful service. His work and vision is, without doubt, 'for the public good'. In short, William "Uncle Bill" O'Brien has made an outstanding contribution to the Biripi people, the Mid-North Coast community and to Charles Sturt University.

**Dated this Ninth Day of December Two Thousand and Nineteen**