

The Captain Reg Saunders Memorial Scholarship

Background

The RSL established this tertiary level scholarship for drug and alcohol abuse studies in 1992 for students of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. The Scholarship was named for Captain Reginald Walter Saunders MBE.

In the development of the Scholarship, consultation with ATSIC revealed then, the urgent need for qualified substance abuse professionals among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. As such, the Scholarship required an applicant to follow studies associated with the eradication of drug and alcohol abuse. Where student's courses did not specifically contain subjects or units dealing with substance abuse, (e.g. nurses aid) the students must be able to provide scope for such studies in their elective subjects and/or field placements.

For some years now the RSL administration of the granting of the scholarships has been established through the RSL National Trustees.

The Scholarship

One scholarship per year of \$2000 to a student nominated by the University for agreement by the RSL National Trustees.

The successful student must be of good academic standing and have the intention to use their skills or profession for the benefit of the aboriginal community.

While a need for the eradication of drug and alcohol abuse remains important in applying the scholarship money, the grants may be used for leadership and personal development of recipients such that on their placement back in their communities they will be better equipped generally to provide a positive example and to advise on and assist in substance abuse among their other professional skills.

Half yearly progress reports are required.

Brief History of Captain Saunders

Captain Reginald Walter Saunders MBE, a member of the Gunditjmara tribe, was born on 7 August 1920, in the small town of Purnim just outside the Framlingham Aboriginal reserve in the Western District of Victoria.

At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 he joined the Second Australian Imperial Force. This was part of his heritage, that of being a warrior. His people, the Gunditjmara, had fought many battles with the white settlers in trying to retain their land.

He then began his military career, serving in World War II and Korea. During World War II he was selected for training at an Officer Cadet Training Unit, where he graduated as a Lieutenant with men such as Tom Derrick VC. Later promoted to Captain, Reg Saunders served in the 6th Division and saw action in the Middle East and New Guinea.

In Korea he was the Officer in Command of 'C' Company of the Third Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR). This Battalion won a United States Presidential Citation for the Battle of Kapyong.

During the last 20 years of his life, Reg Saunders worked with the former Department of Aboriginal Affairs. He was awarded an MBE in 1977. He died in 1990.