

Chris Nyst and Jason Murakami Gold Coast Legal Stalwarts support Indigenous Lawyers

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IT'S not lost on Joshua Creamer that for two centuries men wearing legal wigs and robes determined the welfare of his indigenous ancestors.

Following the tabling of the national Doing Time - Time for Doing report into indigenous youth in the criminal justice system, that history was at the front of the 29-year-old Brisbane barrister's mind when he slipped on his own wig and robes, standing tall as one of four indigenous barristers working in Queensland.

"My real thought is that this is my connection to the past," he said in the chambers of the Petrie Terrace office where the Mount Isa-raised Wannyi and Kalkadoon man works tirelessly in the areas of native title, criminal law, commercial law and civil and human rights.

"There's a real pride there for me in that. I always feel a deep connection to what's happened before me."



PRIDE IN PAST: Aboriginal barrister Joshua Creamer says he is strongly connected to his Wannyi and Kalkadoon heritage. Picture: Tim Marsden
Source: The Courier-Mail

According to the Doing Time - Time for Doing report, compiled by Queensland Labor MP Shayne Neumann and a bipartisan committee on indigenous affairs, the incarceration rate for indigenous Australians rose by 66 per cent in the years between 2000 and 2010.

In 2007, indigenous kids made up 59 per cent of the numbers in juvenile detention.

"Recommendation number four of our report was a national program to develop and provide local mentors," said Mr Neumann. "Good role models like Joshua Creamer are just the role models we need. Someone they can look up to.

"The evidence is quite clear that the indigenous children who complete their education are far more likely to participate in the workforce.

"If you drop out, you are more likely to engage in substance abuse.

"You are more likely to get involved with alcohol and criminal behaviour and that's why we've seen such alarming rates of indigenous incarceration in the last 10 years.

"We have gone backwards since the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody. That is the stunning reality."

As a boy, Joshua Creamer only ever imagined himself capable of working in the Mount Isa mines. But his mother changed that.

"My mother left Mount Isa and she moved us to Yeppoon to get me a good education at St Brendan's College," Mr Creamer said.

"The difference between me and a lot of the guys that I grew up with was the fact that I was able to go to a good school. You don't even consider something like becoming a lawyer when you're not exposed to the idea.

"My mother made that happen for me by making sacrifices along the way and she's still doing that for my youngest brother who's 16."

Mr Creamer worked six out of seven days in a Yeppoon butchery to put himself through high school and law school.

After graduating from law school, he was taken in last year by Gold Coast legal stalwarts Chris Nyst and Jason Murakami.

"They helped me to develop not just as a young lawyer, but as a young man," Mr Creamer said. Appropriately, he thanked Nyst Lawyers last year by preparing for them a barbecue feast showing the full spectrum of his remarkable skills with a butcher's knife.

Everything comes full circle. Now Mr Creamer is president of the Indigenous Lawyers Association of Queensland, where he helps aspiring indigenous lawyers and law students achieve their dreams, in turn helping to put the destiny of indigenous Australians in the hands of indigenous Australians.

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16 Nerang Street, PO Box 3517 Australia Fair, Qld 4215
Telephone: 07 5509 2400 | Facsimile: 07 5571 0949 | Email: mailus@nystlawyers.com.au