



Embracing new world way of delivering education

Micro-credentialing recipients, **STEPHEN DHAMARRANDJI** and **EMMANUEL YUNUPIŊU** are paving the way for a new way of delivering tailored and flexible university study options.

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WHEN STEPHEN DHAMARRANDJI OPENED his inbox to an email confirming his Charles Darwin University (CDU) micro-credential, his eyes welled up with pride.

The email meant much more than a university qualification, it was fulfilment of a dream to follow in his mother's footsteps and to help his community on Elcho Island, off the coast of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

Stephen and Emmanuel Yunupinju are the first two recipients of the Northern Institute's new Indigenous Community-based Researcher micro-credential.

The credential recognises in-depth knowledge of community, culture, country and research. Both men completed on-the-job training in community and on their homelands, pairing traditional and customary knowledge with non-Indigenous academic and research practices.

The micro-credentials are part of a new push by CDU to offer flexible and tailored study options that meet the needs of the community.

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education Strategy Professor Robert Fitzgerald said micro-credentialing was a new world way of thinking about the provision of university education.

Left: The Northern Institute's Dr Michaela Spencer, micro-credentialing graduate Stephen Dhamarrandji and fellow researcher Rosemary Gundjarranjbuy plan for upcoming community research projects.

"Micro-credentials have a strong university and academic basis but are unique because they offer alternative ways for recognising achievements, ensuring they reflect the needs of the student and the purpose of the qualification," Professor Fitzgerald said.

"It is early days, but CDU is exploring the potential for these credentials to expand and be available to students interested in short courses, single units of study or other on-country forms of learning and employment. We want our community to know that university study can be more than just a degree, diploma or certificate. There are many options for every student."

■ I want to get more skills and training so I can be a good leader.

College of Indigenous Futures, Arts and Society Dean Professor Ruth Wallace said micro-credentials had enormous potential, especially for recognising Indigenous traditional and cultural knowledge.

"As a dual-sector university we have a social responsibility to make university education accessible to anyone who may want to pursue higher education study. That means looking at new ways of delivering education that shows respect for skills and knowledge that don't fit the standard Western education framework," Professor Wallace said.

"This is particularly evident in the way we work with Indigenous communities whose knowledge is based upon thousands of years of experience, culture and tradition. These inherent and specialised skills should be recognised and valued."

Micro-credentialing recipient Emmanuel Yunupingu received his award after working as a co-researcher with the Northern Institute's Dr Michaela Spencer on a monitoring and evaluation project for the Northern Land Council's Community Planning and Development program.

Emmanuel said the Indigenous community researcher badge would help make sure research was carried out in the right way in his community of Gapuwiyak.

"By getting involved in research and working with CDU, I can let people know what the research is all about, and make sure all the right people are involved," he said. "This is an exciting time for me; I want to get more skills and training so I can be a good leader for my family."



Micro-credentialing graduate Emmanuel Yunupingu is helping to facilitate research in his home community of Gapuwiyak.

Dr Michaela Spencer, a Post-Doctoral Fellow with the Northern Institute, said micro-credentials presented an opportunity to better engage with potential students in Indigenous communities.

"It's become important for us to develop credentials recognising and supporting people wanting to work and study in their places," she said.

"The flexibility of micro-credentials has allowed us to design small modules of work suited to the particular needs of Indigenous learners on country. They can be place-based and are overseen by both CDU and local Indigenous leaders, so students are recognised for their achievements by appropriate authorities in both Western and Indigenous knowledge traditions.

"Research is only meaningful when guided by people on the ground, so being able to provide a way for local researchers like Stephen and Emmanuel to be recognised for their skills is exciting and meaningful, not for just them but for their whole communities."

■ I've done this for my family and my community back on the homelands.

For Stephen, achieving the Indigenous-Community-based Researcher badge recognised his in-depth knowledge of country, culture and community, and many years' work assisting researchers in his community.

"We want more research projects and more Yolngu involved in these projects," he said. "It is important to have people in the community who can interpret feedback and find better solutions through research for our younger generations.

"I've done this for my family and my community back on the homelands. I want my community to know that anyone can do what I've done and get involved in research." 🌐