

## Talking Together - Elder Profiles

### Uncle Mal Collinge



Uncle Mal is a member of the USQ Elders Advisory Board and a Board member for the Bunya Peoples Aboriginal Corporation

#### Were are you from?

I am a proud Djaku-nde Wulli Wulli man and my traditional countries runs on both sides of the Auburn Range near the Bunya Mountains. Two hours east from there is Wakka Wakka country, towards the south west is Iman, towards the north is Gungaloo and Gurang Gurang is to the north east.

My mum worked hard to raise us kids outside of the protection of the welfare system; we lived in the Redcliff Peninsula area. To a degree us kids raised ourselves, as mum had a heavy workload, so we worked together to raise ourselves. I believe these parts of our lives are what help build character and determination.

#### What is your professional story?

I finished primary school and did one year of high school and then I left school in year 8 and got a job. I started off doing an apprenticeship but I couldn't handle the college stuff that came with it. I then went to work on a pineapple farm and other farms travelling, to Sydney and Brisbane. I did whatever work I could get really, in a way I was floating in the work force. I decided to return to Sydney and got involved in the tyre trade. I started off as a fitter and over a period of time I worked myself up to a state manager for a company in Victoria. One day I saw my reflection in a suit and realized this is not what I wanted to be doing so I went back to doing itinerant picking work, tobacco, grapes, tomatoes, whatever fruit was seasonal. This is where I wanted to be, back on country.

## How are you involved in your community?

A lot of our kids, the young generation need to be given the support to have the confidence to take that step forward especially if they are going through a bad time. The generation just above the younger generation need to assist better, engage with the younger kids while they are still at school, sharing your stories, so they can see that you have had been successful but have also had the failures too, sharing ways in which you got through your challenges through oral tradition.

My work in community includes supporting my traditional owner group in perusing their native titles aspirations, during this process I have gained much interest in and around caring for country. I am passionate about the well-being, education and social justice matters that affect our people and the broader community.

I am a member on the Board for the Bunya Peoples Aboriginal Corporation, which is a corporation that works to better community, taking a holistic point of view especially in regards to natural resource management. Previously researchers visited the area and were looking into the loss of vegetation species on the mountain especially the grass species. Some of the species were being affected by the exotic plants surrounding them. We worked with twenty-two Traditional Owners who came together to discuss solution and future protection for the sacred site.

## What kinds of things are you involved with at USQ?

My involvement in this is mainly because I have a concern about our younger generations where they are at the moment, where they want to be, and where they need to be. To ensure our culture is recognized and protected. I am seeing that USQ has a significant involvement engaging into Indigenous focused activities. The main thing here is about building partnerships, this is why I sit around this table, with these good people working toward creating more opportunities to the community in better ways.

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