TORRES Strait Islander Alister Bartholomew is putting his university education to good use. The 41-year-old from Buderim, in south-east Queensland, recently completed a combined arts and education degree at the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), and is now working as a community partnerships officer with the Department of Education and Training in Maroochydore.

“My current role is to help teachers embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into the school curriculum and also develop and strengthen partnerships between schools and the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families,” the husband and father of two said. “My mother was born on Saibai Island in the Torres Strait but I grew up in Brisbane where there is a strong TSI community attached to the Anglican Church, and attended Kelvin Grove State High School.”

Mr Bartholomew was working as the leading hand at Tondoon Botanic Gardens in Gladstone when he decided to create better prospects for his family by undertaking a degree.

“My ultimate goal is to encourage, to mentor, to help and serve my community via the noble and rewarding profession of teaching,” he said.

Applications are now open to start studying at USC mid-year. For more information visit www.usc.edu.au/midyear or contact student administration at information@usc.edu.au or (07) 5430 2890.

We have students from literally right around Australia, including Alice Springs, the Torres Strait and Tasmania, and when they move such a long way from home to a metropolitan area, it can feel quite isolating,” he said.

“Our mission is to provide them with a community network to make that transition as easy as possible, with cultural and pastoral support, as well as academic support.”

“Because Bond is a small university, we are able to offer a personalised and transformative experience.”

Support

Nyombil will provide community and academic support, including one-on-one tutoring, two dedicated tutorial and group study rooms, computers, printers and a kitchen.

Mr Murray said the new facility was double the size of that originally opened in 2012, to support the growth in enrolments.

“Bond’s retention and completion of Indigenous students is well above the national average, so much so that there is not much difference between our non-Indigenous and Indigenous student bodies – and that’s what our aim is, to close that gap,” he said.

With the Bundjalung Kunjiel Dance Troupe at the opening of the new Nyombil Centre are, from left, Scott Prince, Narelle Urquhart, Daniel Hamilton, Jason Murray, Glendon Woosup and Preston Campbell.