



## **Banking on Indigenous success**

As part of a deep commitment to reconciliation, Commonwealth Bank has partnered with the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) for over 10 years, supporting the education of Indigenous young people and pathways into meaningful careers.

AIEF was established in 2008 in response to community demand from Indigenous families who choose to enrol their children in boarding schools. AIEF provides scholarship funding for Indigenous students to complete Year 12 or tertiary studies, with career support to help them make a successful transition to their chosen fields.

Jess Tedim from Walgett, NSW completed Year 12 in 2017 at St Vincent's College, Potts Point on an AIEF Scholarship.

"I first started at Vinnies in Year 7. There was not much opportunity in Walgett, and only one high school," said Ms Tedim, now 20 years old. "I felt like I could go further and I wanted to get a good education."

"I really enjoyed being on an AIEF Scholarship and going to boarding school. It allowed me to meet other Indigenous students from all over Australia and to access opportunities I never would have had back home."

Jess was a member of the prestigious Tildesley Tennis team and a member of the College's Garraway Dance Troupe, performing Indigenous dances. Upon completing Year 12, she decided to take a gap year and return to Walgett.

"Year 12 was full on," said Ms Tedim. "I felt like I wanted a break and to spend some time back home. I had often stayed in Sydney during the school holidays so I wanted to spend time back in my community."

Jess, a Gamilaroi woman, applied for a job at the local Commonwealth Bank branch as a Customer Service Representative and says working at the bank was a great experience.

"When I saw the job advertised, I knew I wanted to apply. I actually said in my interview that I wanted to give back to the bank which I knew had supported my AIEF Scholarship."



The Commonwealth Bank in Walgett is typical of a remote country town with two staff managing the day-to-day running of the branch.

“My tasks included opening the bank and preparing for each day, including checking the ATMs. Then during the day I would assist with everyday transactions, helping people with their queries and working to understand their financial goals so we could point them in the right direction in terms of their service needs,” Ms Tedim said.



Part of Commonwealth Bank's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is a target to reach employment parity - 3% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation across the Group - by December 2026, with a milestone target of 1.5% by December 2020.

"I loved the culture of the Commonwealth Bank," Ms Tedim said. "Everyone I worked with was so supportive and welcoming. I had to make a lot of phone calls to other branches with questions from customers, and everyone was very helpful."

Earlier this year, Jess relocated to Brisbane for university where she is studying a Bachelor of Business and a Bachelor of Design. She is looking to potentially take up a part-time role with the bank while continuing her studies.

Part of Commonwealth Bank's goal is to promote an inclusive workplace and strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, businesses and communities.

"Having a business operating in Australia, it's important for them to acknowledge and celebrate the traditional owners," Ms Tedim said. "Coming from such a small town with such a large Indigenous community, most people know about their culture. I see it as my role to help teach people about the culture and traditions of where I'm from, to help people gain an understanding about its importance."

"The more we teach people about Indigenous culture, it goes some way toward ending racism and promoting reconciliation in Australia."