

ABOUT AIEF

The Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) is a private sector led non-profit organisation focused on empowering Indigenous children in financial need to build a future through quality education and careers. AIEF is a product of strong partnership between the Australian Government and the private sector and has deep and broad support from all layers of the Australian community. AIEF is low cost, high impact, simple and effective and is proven to work.

AIEF has two interconnected and innovative core strategies:

1. the AIEF Scholarship Programme - a \$40 million joint venture supported by the Australian Government, that provides boarding school scholarships for Indigenous children to attend some of the leading schools in the country that provide a high expectations and world-class education to equip students for life in the 21st century; coupled with
2. the AIEF Post-School Pathways Programme to work with our major corporate partners to assist well-educated and job-ready Indigenous school leavers move from school to tertiary study and leading companies for meaningful careers.

AIEF is under the Patronage of some of Australia's most respected civic leaders and is managed and governed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals with proven track-records in the private sector.

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Developing a Long and Trusting Relationship with Indigenous students

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The Chief Executive of the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) Andrew Penfold, delivered a key note address on Indigenous boarding school scholarships at the ABSA Conference 'Point of Difference: Recognising and Embracing Diversity in Our Community' in September 2010. In this edition we explore AIEF's newest initiative – a mentor programme that partners Indigenous boarding school students with an experienced, professional mentor from the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

AIEF is a non-profit organisation that provides boarding school scholarships and career pathways to empower Indigenous children to build a future through quality education and careers.

AIEF's network of partner and relationship schools include Kincoppal-Rose Bay School, Loreto Normanhurst Sydney, Presbyterian Ladies' College Sydney, Pymble Ladies' College, St Catherine's School Waverley, St Scholastica's College Glebe, St Joseph's College Hunters Hill, St Vincent's College Potts Point and The Armidale School in New South Wales, Clayfield College Brisbane, Marist College Ashgrove, St Augustine's College Cairns, St Joseph's Nudgee College, St Peter's Lutheran College, St Saviour's College Toowoomba, and The Cathedral School Townsville in Queensland. The Indigenous students at these schools come from more than 100 different home communities in metropolitan, regional and remote parts of the country.

In 2009, AIEF introduced the AIEF Post-School Pathways Programme in New South Wales to complement the AIEF Scholarship Programme. Through the Pathways Programme, AIEF works with Indigenous students through age-appropriate activities whilst they are at school to create, identify, coordinate and facilitate future pathways and opportunities so that they have a smooth transition into the workforce or into further study at university or vocational education and training upon completion of Year 12. Activities under Pathways include: workshops; workplace experience visits; and work activities including work experience, part-time employment, holiday jobs and school-based traineeships.

The AIEF Mentor Programme is the cornerstone of the Pathways Programme. It aims to create a structured and trusting relationship which brings a young Indigenous person together with an individual with life and career experience who can share their knowledge and offer guidance, support and encouragement to help the young person make good decisions about their life and career.

The Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) was a founding corporate partner of AIEF. Now, volunteer mentors from the CBA, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, are matched one-on-one with an Indigenous student from one of the participating schools. Through this deeper engagement, CBA staff are able to see first-hand the difference a quality education is



making to these children and it also provides an opportunity for them to further add to the student's experience at boarding school.

AIEF has developed best-practice screening and monitoring processes to ensure that both students and mentors are safe and comfortable in the mentoring relationship and that mentors can provide effective support for their student. Mentors meet with their student once a month, and communicate via email and phone between meetings. Each mentor supports their student to maximise their opportunities and achievement in tertiary education, career development, personal development and leadership. Mentors may also share their personal and professional networks to support their student. Some of the activities include: listening, assisting with goal setting, study and career plans, helping students recognise their strengths and being a sounding board for ideas and problems.

A feature of the programme for participants last year was the Girls in the City: Corporate Wardrobe Challenge where students were given a donated \$100 Westfield voucher and an afternoon with their mentor to find the perfect corporate outfit for a first job interview.

Last year as part of the first intake of the Mentor Programme, volunteer mentor Karen James was partnered with Indigenous Year 12 student Keiryn Lenoy from Pymble Ladies' College. Karen, a General Manager at the CBA and mother of two, initially applied to be a mentor with a view to perhaps helping a student to develop a positive outlook on the future, a plan to achieve their goals and maybe assist with some practical strategies.

After the first year as Keiryn's mentor, Karen reflected on their relationship, "Keiryn is everything I hope my daughters graduate to be and her opportunities at university are plentiful. I believe that it is often the simple, practical advice provided at the right time which can make all the difference in a person's life. Being a part of Keiryn's support network is an honour."

Keiryn completed Year 12 at Pymble Ladies' College in November 2010 and will start her studies in Biomedical Science at the University of Technology Sydney later this month. The relationship has been a valuable support to Keiryn, "My mentor is a very caring and understanding person. She is a very experienced and has realistic advice to give and I'm thankful that she has helped through the transition from high school to beginning

university". Both Karen and Keiryn hope to continue their mentoring relationship, and AIEF staff look forward to supporting this relationship and many more into the future.

"I would love the opportunity to have my mentor see me graduate with a university degree," Keiryn said.

In 2011, approximately thirty Indigenous students from AIEF partner schools in Sydney will be participating in the programme, partnered with their own professional and experienced mentor.

The AIEF Mentor Programme works to create strong, meaningful relationships which will potentially support the students throughout key transitions in their life. Whilst the initial commitment from the volunteer mentor is 12 months, AIEF encourages the relationship to continue post year 12 and well into adulthood.

1. Former student Keiryn Lenoy (third from left) shares her experiences with some of the 2011 intake of volunteer mentors participating in the AIEF Mentor Programme at a recent training session