

### Farewell school of hard knocks

HARRY EDWARDS

TARRYN Brown-Williams's father died when she was young, after which her mother struggled to raise her eight children and care for an autistic son with the aid of relatives and members of her tribe, the Wiradjuri.

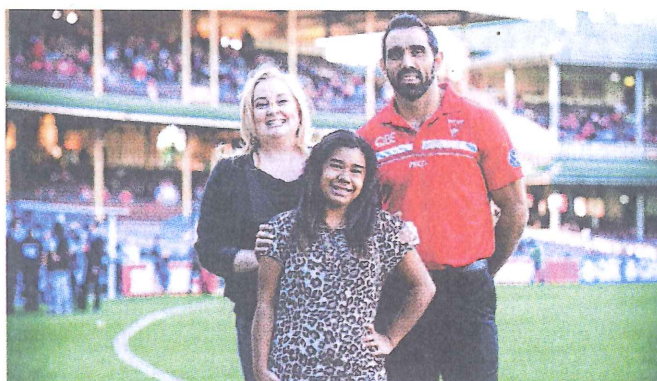
"Sometimes it was really tough but we had a lot of family to support us and my mum is a very strong woman," Tarryn recalled.

In Year 9 she attended Vincentia High School, near Jervis Bay on NSW's south coast, with many of the other indigenous children from the region and had only limited academic prospects.

Now Tarryn is in her second year as a boarder at Kincoppal-Rose Bay, a private school in Sydney's eastern suburbs, and is well on her way to her goal of studying psychology at university.

The 16-year-old is one of more than 250 indigenous students at private schools across the country supported by scholarships from the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation.

The break came after a lot of work from her family to place her on a scholarship, particularly by Tarryn's grandmother, who beat the odds to graduate from law in an even tougher generation.



DAN HIMBRECHTS

Catherine Badran, Tarryn Brown-Williams and Adam Goodes

"My grandmother grew up in an environment when indigenous people were very looked down on," Tarryn said.

"Basically, she was asked why she went to school."

Living away from her family is hard for Tarryn, but she has support from Catherine Badran, 43, one of nearly 100 mentors in the AIEF program, which aims to build relationships to help the students make the transition from school to university.

"She is someone on the outside I can go to when I need advice or help with a particular thing. She is such a big help emotionally."

The pair went to the Sydney Swans game on Saturday — the

AFL is an AIEF sponsor — and were joined by superstar indigenous player Adam Goodes.

"It was an amazing experience and it was Catherine's first AFL game," laughed Tarryn.

For Ms Badran, who Tarryn meets once a month, the relationship is reciprocal.

"She is amazing with the amount of grace with which she handles situations," she said. "Some people might think that going into this thing is what they can do and share, but equally as to what Tarryn gets, I benefit also."

The AIEF plans to send 2000 indigenous students through Australia's best private schools over the next 20 years.