

Boarding school moulds Arthur for success



MITCHELL NADIN

AT 17, Arthur Currie has the world at his feet. He's a promising athlete, popular among his peers and looks forward to graduating high school at the end of this year, which would have been a hopeless aspiration not long ago.

Arthur's family of eight moved to western Sydney from Queensland when he was seven years old. After struggling through primary school with a poor attendance record and average grades, Arthur's future looked bleak.

When his parents decided to move back to the family home on the outskirts of Logan City in southeast Queensland, Arthur's aunt was concerned about the lack of opportunities up north, and applied for a scholarship for her nephew in the hope he could attend a private boarding school in Sydney's west.

Five years later, his results at St Gregory's College in Campbelltown speak for themselves.

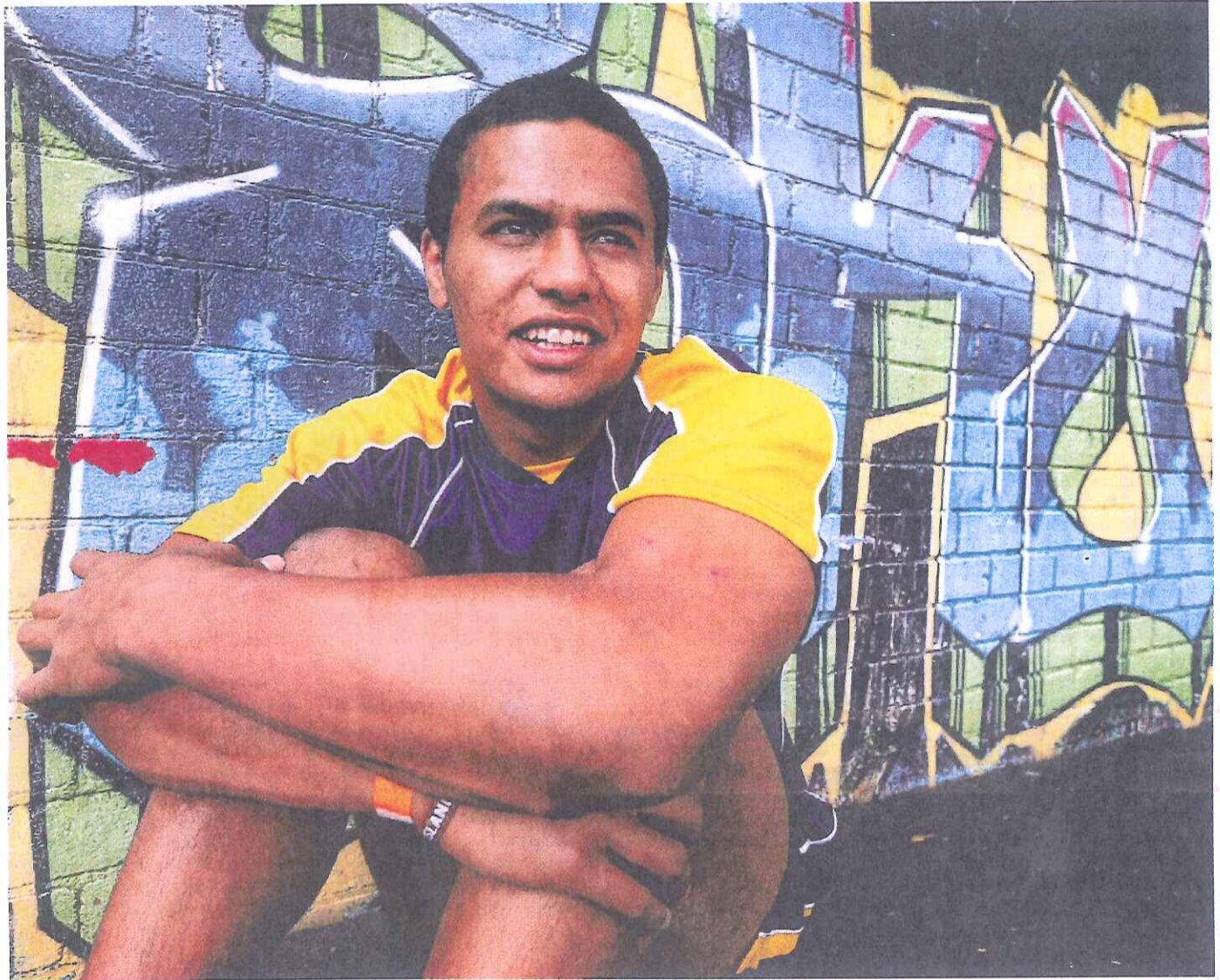
"If I had've stayed in Queensland, I wouldn't have had much of a life," he said. "I have a great opportunity here to play sport and that's what I'm doing, playing rugby league and union, and AFL. It (the scholarship) has taken me a long way."

Andrew Penfold, chief executive of the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, which funds the scholarship program, said Arthur's story was a wonderful example of what the foundation can offer. "Arthur's experience illustrates how a good education can allow young people to achieve great things in their life," Mr Penfold said.

A promising footballer, Arthur has been selected for the train-on squad for the Australian Youth Olympics Rugby Seven's team and also the Australian Indigenous and Australian President's XV rugby union side. "These days I'm loving it (school)," Arthur said. "I've got really good mates, the teachers are nice and respect you, but I do get a bit homesick."

He is one of more than 60 AIEF scholarship recipients across Australia going into Year 12 this year. From just two Year 12 graduates in 2009, the AIEF program has grown exponentially.

But while the AIEF is going from strength to strength, an-



RENEE NOWYTARGER

Arthur Currie's future is bright because of the scholarship that allowed him to attend St Gregory's College in Campbelltown

other indigenous education program was revealed to be under threat because of possible cuts to federal government funding.

Last week, *The Australian* reported that Darwin's Kormilda College — the biggest boarding school for indigenous students in the Northern Territory — was considering closing its boarding house, which caters for 220 students from remote communities.

The students' places are fully funded by the federal government, but the school claims the monies are no longer enough to cover the boarding costs.

Mr Penfold said it would be "disappointing" if Kormilda was forced to deny indigenous students a place because of a funding shortfall.

"The school is obviously doing great things for kids who might not otherwise have such educational opportunities, so it would be a shame if some students missed out," he said.