

### Family tree of achievers inspires student



NATASHA ROBINSON

AT just 15 years old, Jayde Hagan sat her parents down in their home in Toowoomba and announced she was off to boarding school.

It was a reversal of the agonising conversation many parents from regional and remote towns have with their children, but the attitude of the intelligent and focused teenager didn't surprise her mother one bit.

"She knows where she wants to be," says Rhonda Hagan. "She wanted to do something great with her life, she's always been motivated and strove to achieve whatever she could."

Jayde has now been selected as one of five young indigenous engineering students who have been offered scholarships following a joint partnership between the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation and BHP Billiton.

Now 17, Jayde this year began a bachelor degree in civil/mining engineering at the University of NSW, after finishing her schooling at Brisbane's Clayfield College, where she excelled



JAMES CROUCHER

**Jayde Hagan has won a scholarship to study engineering**

in mathematics and physics.

The AIEF and BHP have co-invested \$2.5 million to provide scholarships for 25 indigenous students. The scholarships cover payment of accommodation, meals and other expenses at a university residential college up to a maximum of \$20,000 per year, university fees and textbook expenses, and also provide a living allowance of up to \$6000 per year.

Vacation internships and a place on BHP's prestigious graduate program in Western Australia are also on offer.

"It's really exciting, to be a female and especially an indigenous

female, in engineering, because there's not really many of us," Jayde says.

"I'm so excited about just being out there working and designing things and really making a change for others."

Jayde, who on her father's side has a connection to the Kullilli peoples of far southwest Queensland, and to the Mamu peoples south of Innisfail on her mother's side, is following in a pioneering family tradition.

Her great-grandfather Albert was one of the first Aboriginal men to set up a grocery store, with no electricity or running water, in

a large Aboriginal fringe camp on the outskirts of Cunnamulla in the 1950s.

Her grandfather Jim Hagan was the first Aborigine to address the UN in 1980; and her father, Stephen, served as one of Australia's first Aboriginal diplomats in the 1980s.

Jayde is joined by four other inaugural scholarship recipients: Jack Milgate, 20, from Mullumbimby in northern NSW; Tyrone Tugara, 18, from Bundaberg in Queensland; Balin Willoughby, 19, from Kempsey in NSW; and Tim Hill from Lismore in northern NSW.

Richard O'Connell, BHP Billiton's head of community and indigenous affairs, said the company was "committed to creating a brighter future for indigenous members of our communities through generational change".

"A significant driver for generational change is access to quality education," Mr O'Connell said.

AIEF chief executive Andrew Penfold described the scholarships as a "door opener".

"An education isn't like a blanket that you can give someone who is cold," Mr Penfold said.

"An education is an opportunity you give someone, but they have to do the work themselves in order to be successful. That's why education is the fundamental key to unlocking potential."