

## KYLE'S JUST ONE OF MANY PUT ON THE RIGHT PATH

JENNIFER SEXTON

KYLE Derrick didn't bother much with going to school — he preferred sleeping in and playing Xbox when he was living at home in Dubbo with his mum.

A few years later and his life is turning around.

At boarding school he's enjoying maths, English and sport, and recently returned from a week-long camping trek through the bush, relying on teamwork, a compass and a backpack of supplies to survive.

Last month he got his first passport to travel overseas, one of the team selected to play in England and France for the NSW 2013 Rugby League Aboriginal Young Achievers Tour.

These are all opportunities that two years ago never seemed possible for this 16-year-old.

Derrick says moving in with his dad in Dubbo was the first step toward ending the aimless drifting and building a future. "He pushed me to play sports, he took me to school every day, and he watched every game of my rugby league," Derrick says.

"He said if you want to make something of your life you need to go to school."

The next step was getting into the right school, and when he first sought a place at St Gregory's College in Campbelltown, he was knocked back because his school attendance and reports were bad. He knuckled down in Year 7 at Endeavour College in Caringbah and he demonstrated he could improve, before being selected for a scholarship with the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation to study at St Greg's.

"I feel safer and better now. I can get a good education and it's better for sport," Derrick says.

The AIEF also supported his camping trek with Outward Bound through the Namadgi National Park outside Canberra.

Derrick says it challenged him — abseiling, cooking his own food and setting up a "bivvie", a makeshift shelter of ropes and a tarp. "I've always been a bit of an individual but I'm opening up and starting to talk to people, and I can work in teams," he says. "When I went to camp, I wasn't confident, I was a bit nervous but now I'm feeling good. It was really cold at night and sometimes possums crawled in to my bivvie. When I felt them crawling on my leg, I had to kick them out."

St Greg's head of boarding Matthew Brennan said the benefits of AIEF scholarships go beyond financial support, through to experiences like outward bound and the AIEF mentoring program that helps students set career paths and gives guidance through university. "It's about connections," Mr Brennan says.

An AIEF scholarship has enabled Dubbo's Kyle Derrick to attend St Gregory's College and below, scholarship founder Andrew Penfold.