

## Scholarships open doors to the world



MARIE NIRME

Avea Sabatino, 17, right, with her mentor and good friend Karin Setchell from the Commonwealth Bank at Cottesloe Beach in Perth

NICOLAS PERPITCH

AVEA Sabatino won an indigenous scholarship to a Sydney private school, travelled to Japan as a youth science delegate, is trying out for the state under-20s basketball team and plans to study mining engineering.

The 17-year-old, originally from Thursday Island in the Torres Strait, has sought to make the most of the opportunities presented to her through an Australian Indigenous Education Foundation scholarship to Sydney's Presbyterian Ladies' College.

She believes it has helped her



gain the confidence to do the things she wants and now plans to one day give the same opportunities to other young indigenous students. Avea worked hard at PLC, studying chemistry, biology, general maths, advanced English and ancient history.

In August she was selected to attend the Asian Science Camp in Tsukuba, Japan, as part of the Australian delegation. She is now

waiting on her tertiary entrance scores and has applied for a joint AIEF-BHP Billiton scholarship to study engineering at Curtin University in Perth, where she and her family live.

"I could basically think about all these different things and not be able to choose them, but through AIEF I can say I want to do this and actually be able to go on and do it," Avea said.

As part of the AIEF Pathways Program to prepare students for life after school and the transition to tertiary studies, Avea was paired with a mentor, Karin Setchell, a Commonwealth Bank executive, to provide her with

guidance and support. "With Karin, I'll stay in contact with her hopefully for the rest of my life because we've become good friends," she said. "It's up to the person what they want to do with that support. Knowing that it's there is a good thing."

The two met again on the weekend in Perth. Ms Setchell said her friend had learned a lot; she knew what she wanted, understood the options available to her and was "ambitious but humble".

She was impressed by Avea's "resilience and desire to try new things, to gain the experiences, to grab the opportunities when and as they present themselves, and to

be astounded by her confidence". "She's always been quietly confident but you see her blooming."

Avea, who did not go to schoolies celebrations because she was trying out for the WA under-20s state basketball team, hopes to also become a mentor.

Her sister Siale, 12, and brother Kemaeta, 14, are also on AIEF scholarships at private schools.

The not-for-profit organisation works with the private sector to support more than 200 indigenous children and "empower them to realise their potential, break the cycle of poverty, take responsibility for their own future, and become leaders".