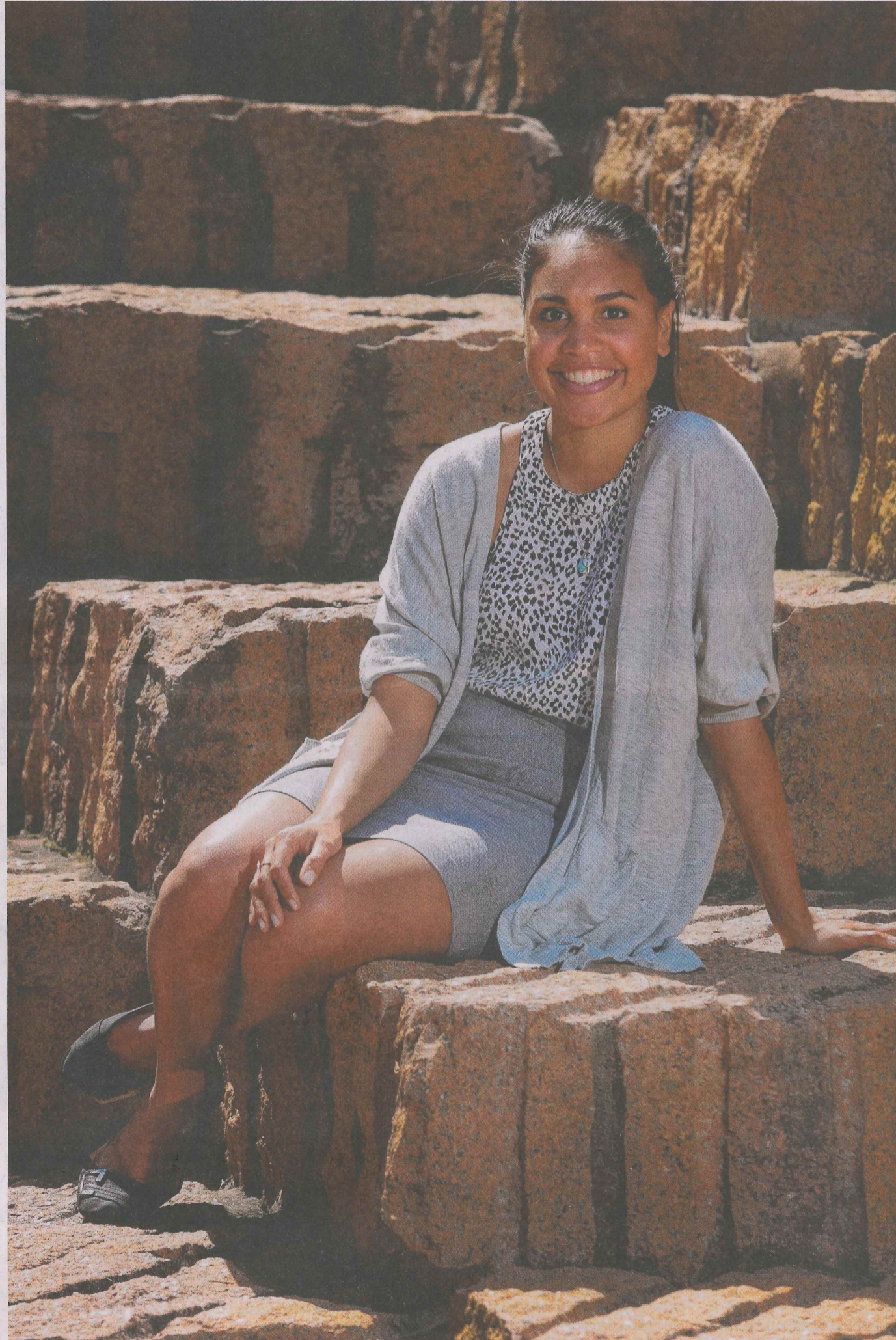


Mob motivation an aid to realising potential



 **AIEF**
AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

GINA RUSHTON

Sarah Treacy is determined to improve the quality of education for indigenous students in Western Australia's east Kimberley region.

"I want these kids to realise their potential and ability to achieve whatever they set their minds to," the 21-year-old Kija woman said.

Just 18.7 per cent of those aged 15 to 24 in the area have completed Year 12, but Ms Treacy, in her penultimate year of primary school teaching, is positive the region just needs greater leadership in education.

After she appeared in *The Australian* last month, she was contacted by Peter Buckskin at the University of South Australia, who invited her to speak on a panel at the Our Mob Teach conference in Adelaide yesterday. "This could not have come at a more perfect time," she said. "I feel really motivated and it has made firm that this is what I want to do."

She spoke to an audience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and leaders about her journey through school and into Macquarie University in Sydney. Growing up in Broome, she hoped to join the Bangarra Dance Theatre, but teaching eclipsed that dream when an Australian Indigenous Education Foundation scholarship came her way. She became the first indigenous student at Loreto Normanhurst on Sydney's upper north shore. "I spoke at the conference about being a bit of a guinea pig and ... having to take on leadership," she said.

Ms Treacy was inspired by a speaker who explained that indigenous educators had a lot to give all Australians. "Having non-indigenous students see indigenous teachers breaks down their barriers and normalises having Aboriginal educators," she said.

She is motivated by her first student placement at a mission community Kalumburu. On arrival, she noticed the youth were bored and had little to do, so she reopened the youth centre and ran it every afternoon after class.

"By the end of my visit, the fights and swearing had stopped, and it was a shock if a student misbehaved and had to be sent home," she said.

Sarah Treacy in Adelaide yesterday. 'Having non-indigenous students see indigenous teachers breaks down their barriers'

KELLY BARNES

ANDREW PENFOLD P12