

Kick-starting the game of life

 **AIEF**
AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

MARK SCHLIEBS

Nathan Bassani has just bought his own house, is a sought-after diesel fitter and a star player in Queensland's top rugby league competition — and he's only 22.

With an Australian Indigenous Education Foundation scholarship, he moved from his home community of Yarrabah, outside Cairns, to the leafy Brisbane suburb of Ashgrove, where until he graduated Year 12 in 2012 he was a boarding student at Marist Brothers while playing in Queensland's top under-20s rugby league competition. Before he finished school, he had lined up an apprenticeship, riding the final wave of the mining boom when he began working in the NSW Hunter Valley and Gloucester the following year.

"It was just when the mining boom was peaking," Mr Bassani said. "In the second year, it started to deteriorate." But the skills he developed and the money he put away have allowed him to build a comfortable life with his partner in Rockhampton — something he



ORIN LUCKE

Footballer and diesel fitter Nathan Bassani

doesn't think he could have achieved without the AIEF's help. "Everything's going good," he said. "I just thought I'd put in the hard yards while I'm young and hopefully I can relax in the long run."

This year, he was named rookie of the year for the Intrust Super Cup team, the Central Queensland Capras, in the sport he had quit to focus on his work.

"I had three years off because I just wanted to work in the mines so I went down there to Gloucester and in the Hunter Valley," he said. "It's another casual job, pretty much, (because I'm playing) at a semi-professional level."

AIEF executive director Andrew Penfold said Mr Bassani's story should give hope to other young people.

"Nathan's story shows what can be achieved with access to quality education and support for the transition from school to further studies or employment," Mr Penfold said. "With this support, 94 per cent of our scholarship graduates have made a successful transition from school to careers."

"With more funding, we can create more opportunities for young people like Nathan whose success is changing our nation for the better."