

Students give Indigenous scholarships full marks



Sydney Scots College Year 12 students Jaedon Djerrkura, from Yirrkala, East Arnhem, and Jaquin Abbott and Tyreeq Ah Fat from Alice Springs

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RHIANNON DOWN

For Jaedon Djerrkura, the reason to move to the other side of the country to a strange city to pursue his education was to come back home again.

The 17-year-old from the Yolngu culture, who is studying at Scots College in Sydney, travelled to the school from Yirrkala, a community 1000km from Darwin in East Arnhem, after he was offered a scholarship through the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation.

Jaedon, who is half-way through Year 12 HSC assessments, hopes to go to university next year and return to his community as a doctor or health worker when he graduates. "I want to do medicine and work rural so I can still learn the culture and connect with the land," he said.

"And that way, I can still go fishing, which is what I love to do."

He can still recall his nerve-racking first day at the private

boys school, where he studies alongside fellow AIEF scholarship students Tyreeq Ah Fat, 17, and Jaquin Abbott, 18, both from Alice Springs, when he was a 15-year-old. The historic buildings and sweeping grounds in Sydney's harbourside Bellevue Hill are a stark contrast to the coastal community of 3000 people he calls home.

"It was different, it was big," he said, "but I learnt how to be independent, and I got to try new things and make new friends."

As a boarder, his day is filled with tutoring groups, specialised Indigenous prep groups, classes and extra-curricular activities.

It's an opportunity Jaedon doesn't take for granted, relishing every opportunity while always keeping his eye on the prize as the HSC approaches.

"I'm grateful for this opportunity ... AIEF is a great program — it allows for lots of opportunities for Aboriginal people who can't get that type of help," he said.

The AIEF program offers scholarships to Indigenous students and supports about 400 students through secondary schools.