

# Trailblazers of tomorrow

An Australian scholarship program is supporting the next generation of young Indigenous leaders.

When Lailah Prince walked through the gates of St Catherine's School in Sydney to begin Year 7 six years ago, she was a little girl with a big imagination.

Proud people of the Kamilaroi Gomeri nation, Lailah and her family come from the Queensland town of Mungindi, on the border of NSW and some 700 kilometres from Sydney. Her parents applied for a scholarship from the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) so Lailah could attend boarding school and focus on her educational goals. The foundation provides funding for Indigenous students to complete Year 12 or tertiary education, as well as career support to help them make a successful transition into further studies or employment.

"I started as a boarder on an AIEF scholarship at St Catherine's School in 2015 but it took some time for me to realise how important education is," says Lailah, who became the first person in her immediate family to complete Year 12 when she graduated this year.

"Boarding school really helped me open up and create a sisterhood with the girls. Being a boarder at St Catherine's has taught me how a positive environment can uplift and build a person's character."

Lailah's parents have seen their daughter, a bright and confident student, grow in



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maturity and independence. "We want Lailah to use all her strengths to set herself up for a wonderful life, where she can find a career that will nurture the attributes she has and make her happy," says her father, Ronald.

Passionate about sport and health, Lailah enjoys playing rugby league and netball and says she's hoping to study midwifery or nursing at university. "Eventually, I would like to work closely within Aboriginal communities and help strengthen the roles of midwives within these communities."

AIEF executive director Andrew Penfold AM says the demand from Indigenous families far outpaces the funds available for scholarships. "My biggest disappointment is being forced to say no to families with young students like Lailah who are being denied these opportunities," says Penfold.

"If we open doors to quality education and employment for young Indigenous people, they become trailblazers who use their voices in the community to inspire others and create change."

Says Lailah, "I am proud of who I am; my connection to my people and community is strong. The AIEF scholarship to attend an independent boarding school has provided me with opportunities I would not have otherwise received, as well as the structure I needed to keep me on track for the future."



Read more inspiring stories of young Indigenous students who have been proudly supported by the Qantas-AIEF partnership since 2011, at [aief.com.au](http://aief.com.au)

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