



Tymaniah Newman, far right, at the Sydney Opera House with fellow AIEF scholarship recipients Carcia Nallajer, Kodii Young and Dakota Callope

SEB HAGGETT/NCA NEWSWIRE

Bridging cultures: a new chapter awaits

SAM KING

Tymaniah Newman was again stepping into the unknown as almost 100 Indigenous school students celebrated on the steps of the Sydney Opera House on Monday.

After leaving her community in Bamaga in the Cape York peninsula to start boarding school in year 7, she now celebrates the end of high school and the start of a new chapter studying social work at university.

"When I first started boarding school, it was a real culture shock. I didn't know anybody and I bare-

ly spoke English," Tymaniah said. "Everything was different. I remember being shocked I couldn't go out on the boat on the weekends and do all the same things we did back at home."

After receiving a scholarship from the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, Tymaniah quickly settled in to life at The Cathedral School in Townsville, and with support from the AIEF became a strong advocate for her community.

"Boarding school became my second home. I was pretty lucky to have my family and that support, because leaving the community is a big thing for my family and my



cultural and religious values. It was huge," she said.

"The fact that AIEF was specifically an Indigenous scholarship that supports First Nations people and our culture was quite important to me.

"I'm passionate about working in my community, so that has driven me towards social work."

As end-of-school celebrations begin and the world outside school

opens up, Tymaniah faces a new set of unknown opportunities.

"Pursuing tertiary studies straight after school, I think everything will probably be quite new to me. So having that support from AIEF means everything," she said.

"They made it very clear they would support me if I was to pursue any pathway after school, whether it was university or TAFE, or other courses."

Before any of that, though, Tymaniah and her classmates are able to enjoy the celebrations.

"This trip to Sydney has been amazing. I'm very privileged to have this opportunity to come down here, especially being from

such a small community, it means a lot," she said.

"We went to Chinatown today, to the Chinese Garden of Friendship, that was very cool. Then going to the Opera House for the ceremony is really exciting."

AIEF executive director Andrew Penfold said the scale of this year's ceremony was a testament to the foundation's success.

"When AIEF was established, we started with one scholarship student," he said. "To see how that has grown, and to now have around 75 graduates each year, and around 1200 scholarship students and alumni across the nation, is phenomenal."