



Under the Sails

Australian Indigenous Education Foundation 2022 Graduation

Sydney Opera House

02 Feb 2023

Under the Sails shares the stories of those who say 'I do' and celebrate milestones at the Opera House. After years of COVID challenges, AIEF's graduating classes of 2020, 2021 & 2022 finally got to celebrate.

AIEF students flew into Sydney from various communities across Australia to celebrate their graduation at the Opera House, with many visiting Sydney for the first time.

What was it like for the students to graduate at the Sydney Opera House?

After years of COVID challenges, the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) hosted the 2022 Graduation Celebrations at the Sydney Opera House and were delighted to invite the Graduating Classes of 2022, 2021, and 2020 to come together and celebrate their achievements.



What was a highlight from the day for the students, teachers, and guests?

Highlights? Photos on the Monumental Steps, stunning views from the Northern Foyer, jamming along with the Wiggles – take your pick!

For the first time in a long time, AIEF Scholarship Students from across Australia stood side by side for a group photo with all members of their graduating class. With the striking sails behind them and a bustling harbour below, the joyful smiles couldn't be wiped from students' faces. For the AIEF Team, teachers and other guests, this moment served as a reminder of the enduring resilience of the AIEF community and the power of education in fostering the next generation of Indigenous leaders.

The surprise performance by The Wiggles was, of course, another highlight of the night. With the city lights behind them, we danced along to their top hits and other tunes. Corporate guests, students and teachers alike joined in singing childhood favourites and lighting up the dance floor. What a way to end the night!

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Why did you choose the Opera House as your venue?

Steeped in Australian history, the Sydney Opera House was the perfect location to celebrate the student's achievements and bring together AIEF's national community.

Our afternoon began in the colourful interior of the Utzon Room, where we hosted an intimate Graduation Ceremony. With views of the sun across the water, students received their certificates from AIEF Executive Director Andrew Penfold AM, cementing a lifelong memory.

As more guests arrived, we moved to the top level of the Joan Sutherland Theatre. A procession of speeches followed in front of Michael Nelson Tjakamarra's Mural Wall (1987), a fitting backdrop for the moving words shared on the milestone of Year 12 Graduation.

For many students, the Sydney Opera House was a far-off icon seen on postcards or TV. That night they celebrated their graduation with their friends, teachers and community, with countless photos and memories to take home and share.

