

## **Meaningful change that ripples through families**

Investing in education opportunities for young Indigenous students creates meaningful change that often ripples through generations.

Leana grew up in a small rural town in northwest New South Wales where education and job opportunities were limited. Moving off country and over 700km away from family was hard but ultimately felt worth it.

In 2013, Leana received an AIEF Scholarship to attend Loreto Normanhurst in Sydney and with the support of friends, family and an older cousin who also attended the school, it wasn't long before she felt well-settled and began to thrive.

At boarding school, Leana had access to high-quality education including a wide variety of electives like Drama, Business and Legal Studies, as well as valuable extracurricular activities such as sports, leadership and volunteering. Looking back now, Leana acknowledges that many of these opportunities weren't available at her local high school and her options would have been very limited.

In 2018, Leana became AIEF's 500th Indigenous student to graduate Year 12 and she shared with *The Australian* how her passion for drama at high school helped her to recognise her passion for interaction with people and making a difference. As a result, Leana chose to undertake a combined social work and criminology course.

At our 2023 Graduation Celebrations, Leana shared her experience with an audience of over 50 determined young Indigenous students – including her youngest sister. It felt like a full circle moment for her.

From being a young country girl who found it hard to imagine herself ever attending university to 10 years later working as an Indigenous Student Recruitment Officer, Leana is dedicated to inspiring other Indigenous youth to pursue higher education and follow their aspirations.

*“As a kid who never saw themselves at university, having the opportunity to instil belief in Indigenous youth that they are capable of higher education and belong in those spaces is such a rich and rewarding experience.”*

The positive impact extends to her three younger sisters, all of whom have completed Year 12 on AIEF Scholarships. Together, they have transformed the future opportunities available to their family.

*“Being an AIEF Scholar has changed the whole trajectory of my life. I say this with the most certainty, I would not be where I am today without the generous support from AIEF. I would not have met the people I know now, and I would not have had the opportunities and experiences I have had.”*

To date, AIEF has supported over 1,200 young Indigenous people from over 400 communities across Australia. There are hundreds of stories like Leana's that demonstrate the real-life outcomes and ripple effect that occurs.

Together, we can make a lasting change and empower the next generation of Indigenous youth.

