

THE COMPOUNDING RETURNS OF EDUCATION



PERPETUAL IMPACT
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To reduce it to economics, better education has a huge “multiplier effect” - driving positive social outcomes and economic development. And the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) has led the way for a decade.

Perpetual is fortunate to work with some of Australia’s leading not-for-profit and philanthropic organisations. We see the challenges they face, but we also get to see their stories of achievement and triumph.

One such organisation is AIEF, which we’ve been working closely with for a number of years. In 2018 they celebrated ten years of helping young indigenous people to pursue their education at leading schools and universities.

“... if you think education is expensive, try ignorance.” **Ann Landers**

THE GREAT EQUALISER

Education is the great equaliser. It helps those with tough backgrounds to realise their potential, and to get ahead. But it’s also the foundation of a strong economy. Having a smart and motivated population, that’s ready to tackle a rapidly changing

marketplace, is the only way to ensure continued prosperity for all.

Australia should be proud of its rich culture of education and world-renowned institutions, in fact education is one of our key exports. But unfortunately, its benefits aren't as equally distributed as we might like. Children in aboriginal communities have an attendance rate at school that's about 10 per cent lower than for non-indigenous students¹. And that disparity widens as the location of the school grows more remote.

Foundations like AIEF are focussed on breaking through this disparity to offer indigenous Australians, and their families more opportunities to reach their potential.

The program's scholarship students achieved a 94 per cent retention and Year 12 completion rate in 2017. It's the most successful program of its kind in the country.

FROM BROOME TO SYDNEY

Sarah Treacy earned a scholarship from AIEF to complete the last years of high school as a boarder in Sydney. Sarah grew up in Broome in Western Australia, and she has family ties to the Kimberley Region, but AIEF was able to fund a place for Sarah at Loreto Normanhurst in Sydney.

She packed up her life in WA and she headed to the city. She was nervous, unsure of what she'd find. She would live at the school as a boarder, and she explained that fitting in wasn't easy at the beginning.

"Settling into life at Loreto didn't happen overnight, but by Year 12 I'd grown in confidence and I was applying myself to my studies in a way I'd never done before.

In the past, when I'd been living in Broome, I didn't care much for my education, I wasn't motivated. But it was the opportunity to go to boarding school, and get that quality education, I really applied myself in a different way, and discovered that university was something that I could achieve."

Sarah graduated from year 12 in 2012 and from there AIEF helped her to university with a scholarship. She's now studying at Macquarie University, to be a Primary School teacher.

"I realised that education is amazing and it can change your life. That's why I went to university and focussed on teaching."

With ten years of experience under their belt AIEF have developed ways to lessen the social dislocation of leaving one's home and family, to live and study in a faraway school.

"When I first went to Loreto I was the only aboriginal girl in my cohort. I'd come from Broome where half the grade was aboriginal. That was a big change, but AIEF ran events on the weekend, connecting all the aboriginal students together, so I could share my experiences with other mob. It saved me. It was so important, to have that time to socialise with other people going through the same thing."

EDUCATE ONE, TEACH MANY

When it comes to impact, there are few things that can change a life, and indeed a community, as much as giving someone an education. It builds confidence in the individual, but it shows others in the community what's possible. In short, it's a return that compounds, as the individual goes home and helps to share their knowledge.

In Sarah's case she saw a dramatic shift in her attitude towards education. So much so that she wants to be a teacher herself - and to instil that attitude in as many students as she can.

1. <https://closingthegap.pmc.gov.au/education>

2. <https://www.quora.com/Who-said-If-you-think-education-is-expensive-try-ignorance>



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