



DAVID GERAGHTY

Year 11 indigenous scholarship student TJ Bin-Hitam Keeffe is back boarding at Melbourne Grammar after studying at home in the Kimberley

Now that's what you call remote learning

EDUCATION

TESSA AKERMAN

Learning from home for indigenous Melbourne Grammar student TJ Bin-Hitam Keeffe meant a two-hour time difference between Melbourne and the Kimberley, and an even greater difference in swapping his tie for a T-shirt and the boarding-school meals for fresh-caught fish.

The Year 11 student coped for nine weeks with the time difference by waking up at 6am and going for a jog before starting lessons with his class at 7am.

"One of the biggest challenges was the two-hour time difference," he said.



"(The jog) turned it into something positive."

TJ attends Melbourne Grammar on an Australian Indigenous Education Foundation scholarship and if he succeeds in his ambition of studying commerce or business at university, he will be the first in his immediate family to have a tertiary education.

"My family and friends back home really support me schooling away at a place like Melbourne Grammar," he said.

While Melbourne was shut

down for weeks with the weather turning cold and wet, TJ said he enjoyed getting out and about in the West Australian sunshine.

"Camping and fishing with the family — I was always active in some way or another," he said.

He said his family in Derby was wonderful at providing him with a space to study and meeting his needs. "My family understood and respected what I needed to do," he said. "They understand what I want to do when I finish school and the avenue I want to take."

He said his family was also delighted with the unexpected visit.

"My family were definitely pleased to have me back home, especially in the circumstances around coronavirus," he said.

TJ said it was uplifting having

his family around him, and his teachers in Melbourne made it easy to keep up with the work by taking questions via video or email. "I do feel confident (going back to class), but I do feel, like everyone else, that there's a transition period," he said. "It's going to take everyone a bit of time to adjust to the new routine."

AIEF executive director Andrew Penfold said the foundation was proud of scholarship students like TJ who had shown dedication and resilience in the face of shifting challenges. "In what are likely to be tough economic conditions when these students finish Year 12, it is more important than ever that we support indigenous students with their preparation for further study or employment," he said.



TJ swapped boarding-school food for fresh-caught fish