

## Education drives Kirrah's dream

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Kamahl Cogdon, December 8, 2020 6:45PM Kids News

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### HUMANITIES

Reading level: **Red**

Kirrah Stothers has gone from an outback town in the Northern Territory to a boarder\* at one of Australia's most prestigious\* schools.

The Year 11 student's story is part of the inspiring Sky News documentary, Changing Our Nation, which follows a group of indigenous young people studying on Australian Indigenous Education Foundation scholarships\*.

While "terrified" about leaving her hometown of Katherine and starting her studies at Seymour College in Adelaide, Kirrah, 17, now has her sights firmly set on becoming a human rights lawyer and helping First Nations people around the world.

She also has some great advice for other students dealing with their own challenges at school in our Q&A below.

**Q: Tell us about your Australian Indigenous Education Foundation scholarship?**

**A:** When I had decided I wanted to go to boarding school, I asked my parents what they thought of the idea. My Mum said: "If you want to go away, you have to do all the research, paperwork and application forms." So, from then on I just did that. One night I stumbled upon the AIEF website. Mum had heard good things about the program so we looked up all the different schools. I applied because it seemed like lots of other kids were on the scholarships, and there is also a strong support system from AIEF when transitioning\* into university which I found really comforting because at the time I was terrified at the thought of going to uni.

**Q: Do you remember your first day at your new school? What were your first impressions and how did you feel?**

**A:** All I can say is that I was utterly terrified. Everything was so much bigger, people were walking everywhere and they seemed like they actually knew where they were going. I felt like I stuck out like a sore thumb and I was probably going to break something. I never needed to make friends with people before as I had grown up with the same people my entire life, so for the first few weeks of school I didn't speak at all. Lots of people thought I didn't speak English! Now I sit back and laugh at how genuinely terrified I was because everything seemed to work out by itself.

**Q: What are the biggest differences between this school and going to school in your hometown?**

**A:** The pace of school life is a lot faster at Seymour because we have so much going on at all times of the year. That's the biggest difference with going to school back home, because we kind of just went to school then went home. There wasn't really much going on. Getting into the swing of that fast pace atmosphere was hard at first.

**Q: How different is your life in the city compared to life at home?**

**A:** There is a slow calmness that is my life at home, so the biggest difference is constantly being on the go or doing something all the time. It's just always so busy within city life, which can become exhausting at times. I found myself adjusting pretty quickly though. I pretty much just went with the flow of things and became used to the routines around the school. I didn't put much pressure on myself during the first few months to get everything right, so that was the easiest way to deal with not only school life but also the homesickness.

**Q: How do you stay in touch with your family, friends, life and traditions from home?**

**A:** Phone calls, group chats, endless face times and letter writing has been the most helpful when I get homesick. But all of the interactions\* have to be on my terms, otherwise I feel overwhelmed and miss home even more if it's just constant news from home. It's a working balance but my family and friends never make me feel left out or forgotten, which is the biggest help.

**Q: What has been your proudest achievement at Seymour College?**

**A:** Becoming comfortable within the school and the wider community has to have been my biggest achievement. I didn't think when I moved to a new school I'd ever feel like I was supposed to be attending there. In the beginning, I thought I would just get through school and leave. But now I've made some of the most amazing friends, been taught by the greatest teachers and really became a part of the Seymour community.

**Q: What subjects do you enjoy most and why?**

**A:** I love all humanities\* subjects. I am a humanities student — anything to do with the human condition or experience interests me and I love learning about them. I think it's because I just love trying to understand people and how different parts of people's lives can affect them.

**Q: What do you most like about school?**

**A:** I love learning in general, especially things I'm passionate about. So being at a school where I study subjects that I really care about and there's a chance I could do as a career, is everything I could want.

**Q: Describe the impact your new school has had on you and your goals?**

**A:** Seymour made me fall back in love with school, so it means I'm on track with my goals and I believe in myself so I can achieve them.

**Q: What would you like to be when you finish school?**

**A:** I want to go into international and human rights law. I really just want to help people in any way I can, all over the world, but I always really want to assist First Nations people all over the planet in any way I can. I guess I just want to be as helpful to as many people in my life as possible.

**Q: Where do you think you will be and what do you think you will be doing in 10 years?**

**A:** There's a good chance I'll still be studying at uni, whether those courses will be job-related or not is a different question. I could be living overseas somewhere, hopefully, I would have travelled a bit. As long as I'm happy and being helpful to even one person then I'd be pretty fulfilled with that future.

## Q: What advice do you have for kids who don't like school much?

A: School can be hard sometimes. These are a few things that help me get through:

- School isn't going to be forever so think of the end result, graduating and what is waiting for you on the other side
- School isn't for everyone but make the most of the time you have because one day school won't be an option anymore and you know what they say, "you don't know what you have until it's gone"
- Teachers are humans too (I know crazy, right) but they will make mistakes and you might not like them much either, but go easy on them. It's a lot of pressure teaching because when you think about it, they are teaching the people who are going to be in charge of the world one day so that's a heavy weight to carry
- Find a good group of friends who make you happy and really care about you. Trust me, they make the biggest difference

*Changing Our Nation screens on Sky News at 7pm on December 10.*

## GLOSSARY

- **boarder:** student who lives at school
- **prestigious:** admired and respected
- **scholarships:** funds that helps pay for the education of students
- **transitioning:** process of moving from one thing to another
- **interactions:** communications
- **humanities:** subjects about human society and culture, including literature, language, history and philosophy

## EXTRA READING

[Aussie boy youngest to speak at UN\( https://www.kidsnews.com.au/civics/this-12yearold-aussie-boy-delivered-his-request-straight-to-the-un/news-story/5ef6f2ca66d16d681d7ec4066026551f \)](https://www.kidsnews.com.au/civics/this-12yearold-aussie-boy-delivered-his-request-straight-to-the-un/news-story/5ef6f2ca66d16d681d7ec4066026551f)

[Ancient stories brought to life in 3D\( https://www.kidsnews.com.au/humanities/australias-indigenous-languages-are-being-brought-to-life-in-3d-animations/news-story/9cccb111d296f76d588be0ec0c12a376 \)](https://www.kidsnews.com.au/humanities/australias-indigenous-languages-are-being-brought-to-life-in-3d-animations/news-story/9cccb111d296f76d588be0ec0c12a376)

[High hopes for Aussie invention\( https://www.kidsnews.com.au/science/a-teenagers-invention-could-help-save-the-world-from-plastic-pollution/news-story/7a799ee3007ccc978d02353095fc357 \)](https://www.kidsnews.com.au/science/a-teenagers-invention-could-help-save-the-world-from-plastic-pollution/news-story/7a799ee3007ccc978d02353095fc357)

[What is International Mother Language Day?\( https://www.kidsnews.com.au/explainers/what-is-the-united-nations-international-mother-language-day-and-why-does-it-exist/news-story/701bd724a8c0c66e224a22ea60620fca \)](https://www.kidsnews.com.au/explainers/what-is-the-united-nations-international-mother-language-day-and-why-does-it-exist/news-story/701bd724a8c0c66e224a22ea60620fca)

## QUICK QUIZ

1. What is the name of Kirrah's hometown?
2. Where is her hometown?
3. What school does she go to in Adelaide?
4. What does Kirrah want to be when she finishes school?
5. What type of subjects does Kirrah like?

## LISTEN TO THIS STORY

### CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

#### 1. Negative into a Positive

Kirrah has demonstrated a lot of resilience and bravery moving away from her home, friends and family to give herself the best shot at achieving her dreams and attending university. In the last paragraph of the Kids News article, she gives some advice to kids who don't like school much.

Create a table with two columns. Write "Negative aspect of school" at the top of the first column and "Turn into a positive" at the top of the second column. Write some of the things that annoy you or that you don't like about school in the first column, and turn them into something positive and how you could change your thinking about it in the second column.

**Time:** allow 15 minutes to complete this activity

*Curriculum Links: English, Critical and creative thinking*

#### 2. Extension

Write down your top three goals to achieve by the end of high school.

Now write five things that might help you achieve these goals between now and then.

Would you like to start working on these things now? Share your goals with your family and friends as they can help you too.

**Time:** allow 15 minutes to complete this activity

*Curriculum Links: English, Personal and social, Critical and creative thinking*

### VCOP ACTIVITY

#### Grammar and VCOP

The glossary of terms helps you to understand and learn the ambitious vocabulary being used in the article. Can you use the words outlined in the glossary to create new sentences? Challenge yourself to include other VCOP (vocabulary, connectives, openers and punctuation) elements in your sentence/s. Have another look through the article, can you find any other Wow Words not outlined in the glossary?