



KYM SMITH

Mary Kerr and Thomas Boase at Duntroon yesterday

Marching to the beat of an inspirational drum

Standing dressed immaculately in uniform, the graduate lieutenant has a message for the wide-eyed students looking up at him: "Exploit the opportunity that you're given."

Like them, Thomas Boase once received an Australian Indigenous Education Foundation scholarship — an opportunity that changed his life and led him to representing the army at a two-day exercise giving indigenous students an insight into what an army career offers.

"I see it almost as an avenue by which I can encourage other AIEF recipients to pursue their future career paths," Lieutenant Boase said at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, yesterday.

At 15, he started at private school in Brisbane, which helped him get the education he needed to chase his dream of being in the army.

"The school really enabled my Year 11 and 12 education and for me to be able to pursue my career path within the army," Lieutenant Boase said.

The 21-year-old had wanted to join the army since he was 14 after meeting his first soldier and realising the culture of "coming together to achieve a mission" was for him, he said.

Without the scholarship, his access would have been hindered. "I would likely still be



somewhere back in southeast Queensland attempting to go to university or performing an unskilled job as opposed to a profession," she said.

While there was no doubt the army needed higher indigenous representation, he wanted students to pursue the career that was best for them.

One of the 14 scholarship recipients at yesterday's exercise, Year 11 student Mary Kerr, said becoming an army doctor now seemed "like a realistic goal".

Having always wanted to be a doctor and join the army, fusing the two seemed like the best of both worlds, she said.

Her school, Pymble Ladies College in Sydney, offered a wide variety of subjects beyond what would have been available to her at home in Darwin.

AIEF executive director Andrew Penfold said Mary was a great example of the AIEF's efforts "to open doors and networks to students and expose them to opportunities they may not have thought about".

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