



BRITTA CAMPION

Family tradition: Lightning Ridge siblings Kyh Samuelsson, 18, and sister Jaidey, 14, in Sydney on Thursday

Indigenous pupils hit 94pc completion rate

NICHOLAS JENSEN

For Jaidey Samuelsson, the chance to leave home and follow in her big brother's footsteps was a chance too good to give up.

Five years after Kyh Samuelsson won his scholarship to Knox Grammar, Jaidey left the family home in Lightning Ridge to travel to Sydney to start school at Pymble Ladies' College.

It was a world away from the plains of northwestern NSW, but a scholarship from the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation seemed like a ticket to a new life. "At home, I didn't think

I'd be able to get a great education, so the opportunity to leave for school in Sydney meant I knew I would get to learn more, meet more people and get more support at school," said the 13-year-old, who started grade 8 this year.

Since 2008, the AIEF has awarded scholarships to more than 1200 students from more than 400 communities, with the program assisting hundreds of undergraduate and postgraduate students to help cover boarding fees and some cost-of-living expenses at university.

In 2021, the foundation achieved a completion rate of 94 per cent among its scholarship students,



with 92 per cent of its alumni now engaged in employment or completing further studies.

Kyh Samuelsson, who is now completing a degree in commerce at Macquarie University after finishing at Knox last year, said educational support offered by the AIEF was the best way to develop young Indigenous leaders.

"I would never have had the

opportunity to do these things before ... It's not just having the opportunity to come to a different place, it's having the opportunity to choose your interests and passions," he said.

"For my younger brothers and sisters ... for me to leave the Ridge and go to boarding school and now university, I'm showing them that if I can do it, they can do it.

"I think the most important thing in our culture right now is having educated Indigenous kids.

"We need Indigenous kids out there well-educated, going into the workforce and making a name for themselves."

Founder and executive direc-

tor Andrew Penfold said the report made clear that students had "produced consistent, groundbreaking results", despite the pandemic and lockdowns. "Record numbers of Indigenous students have completed year 12 and gone on to further study and employment; like Kyh, they have harnessed their potential and become leaders and role models in their communities."

Mr Penfold said a new partnership with the NSW government was already setting a high benchmark for Indigenous education programs across the country, but noted other state funding sources continued to lag behind.