



Macquarie Group
Foundation

Media Release

SUCCESS FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS UNDER HIGHER EXPECTATIONS PROGRAM

Brisbane, 20 November 2007 – The Cape York Institute’s Higher Expectations Program has reached a significant milestone, with the first cohort of students graduating from Year 12.

Currently, only 6 per cent of students from Cape York complete Year 12. The Higher Expectations Program was established in 2005 to enable the region’s top indigenous students to attend Queensland’s leading boarding schools. It is funded by the Macquarie Group Foundation.

Having completed Year 12 at Lourdes Hill College and Rockhampton Girls Grammar School this year, Higher Expectations graduates Ramana Walker, Marijke Bassani, Margaret Bond and Valencia Gilbert all plan to continue to tertiary education. Last year’s sole graduate, Leona Yunkaporta, is now working for Rio Tinto in Brisbane.

John Wenitong, National Indigenous Education Development Officer for the Cape York Institute, said Higher Expectations had provided a setting in which the Cape’s indigenous students could excel.

“Higher Expectations gives students opportunities they would never have in their local community and they have risen to the challenge,” he said.

“The students have had to overcome many cultural and educational hurdles along the way but the program is structured to ensure they have support from their families, communities, schools and the program staff.

“As a result, the Higher Expectations Program has an almost 100 per cent retention rate, which also shows the commitment the students are prepared to make to their education when they are given the opportunity.”

Julie White, Head of the Macquarie Group Foundation, said the four graduating students were great ambassadors for the Higher Expectations program.

“The Foundation has been involved since the 2005 pilot program and I have personally witnessed the development of many of the students involved,” she said. “We are delighted to support this innovative program and greatly encouraged by the results it has achieved.”

Marijke, who was the first indigenous boarder captain at Lourdes Hill College this year, is interested in studying law and politics at Griffith University.

“If someone told me I was going to be boarder captain I wouldn’t have believed them,” she said. “Since receiving the Higher Expectations Program scholarship I feel the sudden urge to succeed in life and perhaps be an inspiration to others to do the same.”

Valencia, who will study Early Childhood at Cairns TAFE, said growing up in Kowanyama on the west cost of Carpentaria, she had never heard of boarding schools.

“My first day at Rockhampton Girl’s Grammar was a big change for me but I thought to myself if I give up now I will never have this opportunity again,” she said. “Higher Expectations was the best thing that ever happened in my life. It gave me pathways to achieve my goals.”

Margaret, who aims to study business at Griffith University, said: “Higher Expectations has given me the best educational opportunity. The interesting lifestyles and diverse cultures that I have experienced at Lourdes Hill College also gave me a better understanding of life.”

Ramana, who joined Higher Expectations in Year 10 at Lourdes Hill College, hopes to study criminology and criminal justice at Griffith University.

“This program has opened a door to many opportunities,” she said. “It has allowed me to further my education and given me the opportunity to travel overseas. It has also provided me with financial assistance which has made my schooling experience a lot easier.”

In other developments, Higher Expectations student Sakirrah Turpin has been selected as next year’s boarder captain at Clayfield College.

Also, eight Year 11 students in the Higher Expectations Program will spend two weeks in Japan next month as part of a student exchange program funded by the Japanese Government. The trip has been facilitated by AFS Intercultural Programs and the Macquarie Group Foundation.

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