

Hello, my name is Eric Fernando, all my friends call me E-J. I was born in Dubbo and have lived here my whole life. I enjoy playing sport, particularly basketball and rugby league.

I currently go to school at the Dubbo Senior College and am in year 11. I was awarded the IYLP scholarship at the beginning of this year. This was the first time I have been recognised as someone special; a leader in my school.

This year the scholarship has been used to purchase essential equipment needed to fully participate in school. This includes school books, calculator, pens, paper, and other stationary.

The laptop provided to me through this scholarship has allowed me to complete work outside the school environment. I am more enthusiastic about doing my assignments when I get home because I have all the materials required at my fingertips.

The scholarship has allowed me to participate in all school excursions for my elective classes. By attending these excursions I have developed communication skills which has allowed me communicate efficiently with various businesses and services in the local community.

The scholarship has allowed me to purchase school uniforms which I wear daily and whilst participating in outside school related activities. Having a school uniform allows me to represent the school confidently and to show others where I'm from.

I have been selected by the Western Academy to represent the region in Rugby League in Fiji this September. The scholarship has allowed for me to attend this event. Rugby league means a lot to me, I have been playing since I was 7 years old and want to pursue a career of it.

This trip means a lot to me. It will help me develop relationships with others players and build upon my personal skills.

At school I am looked up to by my peers. The scholarship has allowed me to continue to be a role model for other students. I speak with year 10 and year 11 kids about what is involved with the scholarship. As a result kids are attending more classes and doing their assignments on time in hope to be selected for a scholarship.

This scholarship has relieved a huge amount of financial pressure upon my family. My parents are very proud of me and what I have achieved through my learning. Within my community awareness has been raised about the availability of scholarships, this has resulted in an increased interest and people are attending information seminars.

Everyone is entitled to an education. Indigenous children are amongst the most disadvantaged in Australia. Scholarships such as the IYLP's work to eliminate some of this disadvantage by reducing financial pressure on families and supplying Indigenous children with essential resources required to fully excel with their education.