# The Kate Mullin Scholarship Program

# Aboriginal Literacy

A critical barrier to Aboriginals competing successfully for jobs in modern Australia is an inferior education and particularly inferior literacy. There is a huge gap in literacy standards between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal children in Australia, increasing for children from remote Aboriginal communities. Illiteracy covers almost all the skills one needs to face real life challenges in a competent, confident way. It directly flows on to one’s ability to compete for employment or go on to further studies.

A major issue is the recruitment and retention of teachers to work in/with Aboriginal communities. When found, teachers are typically thrust into what is for them a challenging environment with which they have little empathy or understanding. Additionally, many of the students do not speak English as their first language. The result is a cultural mismatch, and a consequent high attrition rate of teachers which severely disrupts the students’ schooling.

# The Scholarship

The Kate Mullin Scholarship is specifically designed to address these issues, and has been developed with expert advice. The scholarship will assist Aboriginal people from regional and remote communities (eg Aboriginal Education Workers) to become teachers and return to their communities - thereby strengthening local teaching capacity, ensuring longer term continuity of teaching for the students, and providing effective role models for the students. Importantly, the Aboriginal teacher will provide valuable bi-lingual and bi-cultural abilities, thereby valuing the students’ own language, accessing the Aboriginal concepts so as to adapt the teaching, understanding Western concepts from an Aboriginal perspective, and switching language to help convey a particular concept.

The Scholarship is being offered in conjunction with Edith Cowan University, Central Queensland University and Curtin University. Each university is very experienced in supporting Aboriginal students through tertiary education. The universities help market the scholarship, seek students who are eligible, and filter applications before selection. They will also monitor each student’s progress through the course and intervene where necessary.

The first two scholarships were awarded in 2019 and it is intended to award a further two scholarships in 2020.

# What You Can Do

The Scholarship is $5,000 pa for each of 4 years. We plan to offer two Scholarships each year, so we could have eight scholarship holders at any one time. Over time we will need up to $40,000 pa to support the scholarships. Any contribution is welcome. Donate by going to the web site [katemullinassociation.org/support-us](http://katemullinassociation.org/support-us), filling out the form and transferring the funds to the bank account. All donations are tax deductible. As the KMA has no overheads, your contribution goes directly towards the Scholarships, with the outcome being improved literacy for our Aboriginal children and help in them making their way in the world.