

ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
**HOST AFTERNOON TEA FOR THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S INDIGENOUS STUDENT
TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS**
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA
9 AUGUST 2010

Ladies and gentlemen, I am really thrilled to welcome you to Government House today for this inaugural occasion that acknowledges and awards the first recipients of the Governor-General's Indigenous Teaching Scholarships.

Open to indigenous men and women undertaking tertiary teaching studies, this scholarship program:

emphasises the need to strive for the highest standards in teacher education,

and the special role indigenous teachers have in improving educational outcomes for young indigenous Australians.

It is a program that I feel immensely proud to champion.

And, scholars, I want you to be very clear about why you are here.

You have been nominated to receive this prestigious award because you have demonstrated to the selection committee:

your intellectual ability and academic discipline

your commitment to a career in teaching and to teaching excellence

your belief in what education can do for each and every individual

its promise of self-respect, self-empowerment, opportunity, choice, a future, an enduring asset that grows in value over a lifetime;

and your passion and sense of responsibility to use your skills and qualities to bring about change for the better for young indigenous Australians.

Not only are you practitioners and advocates in the making, you are,

each in your own right,

due to your own accomplishments

testament to the transformative power of education.

I will always cherish the sacrifice my parents made for my own, and I have held onto the strength of that commitment as a mother and grandmother, and in working with young people throughout my career.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is no surprise that Nelson Mandela declared that education is the most

powerful weapon we can use to change the world.

And in Australia, there is change afoot:

By the end of 2008, almost 24,000 indigenous men and women had graduated from Australian universities, with nearly 1500 graduating annually.

More than 90% had bachelor or graduate degrees…and the annual retention rate is now more than 80%.

These are remarkable results for the first generation of indigenous university graduates.

But, scholars, you are not numbers.

You are among our future leaders:

leaders of young indigenous Australians in our schools, equipping them to rise to life's opportunities and challenges

and leaders of all Australians, indigenous and non-indigenous.

In your vital roles as educators, you will in your classrooms every day:

exemplify reconciliation

expand young minds

and enrich young spirits.

WB Yeats said "Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire".

Scholars, that's one fire I want to see spread throughout the land.

I give you my greatest praise and encouragement for your life-changing journeys ahead.