

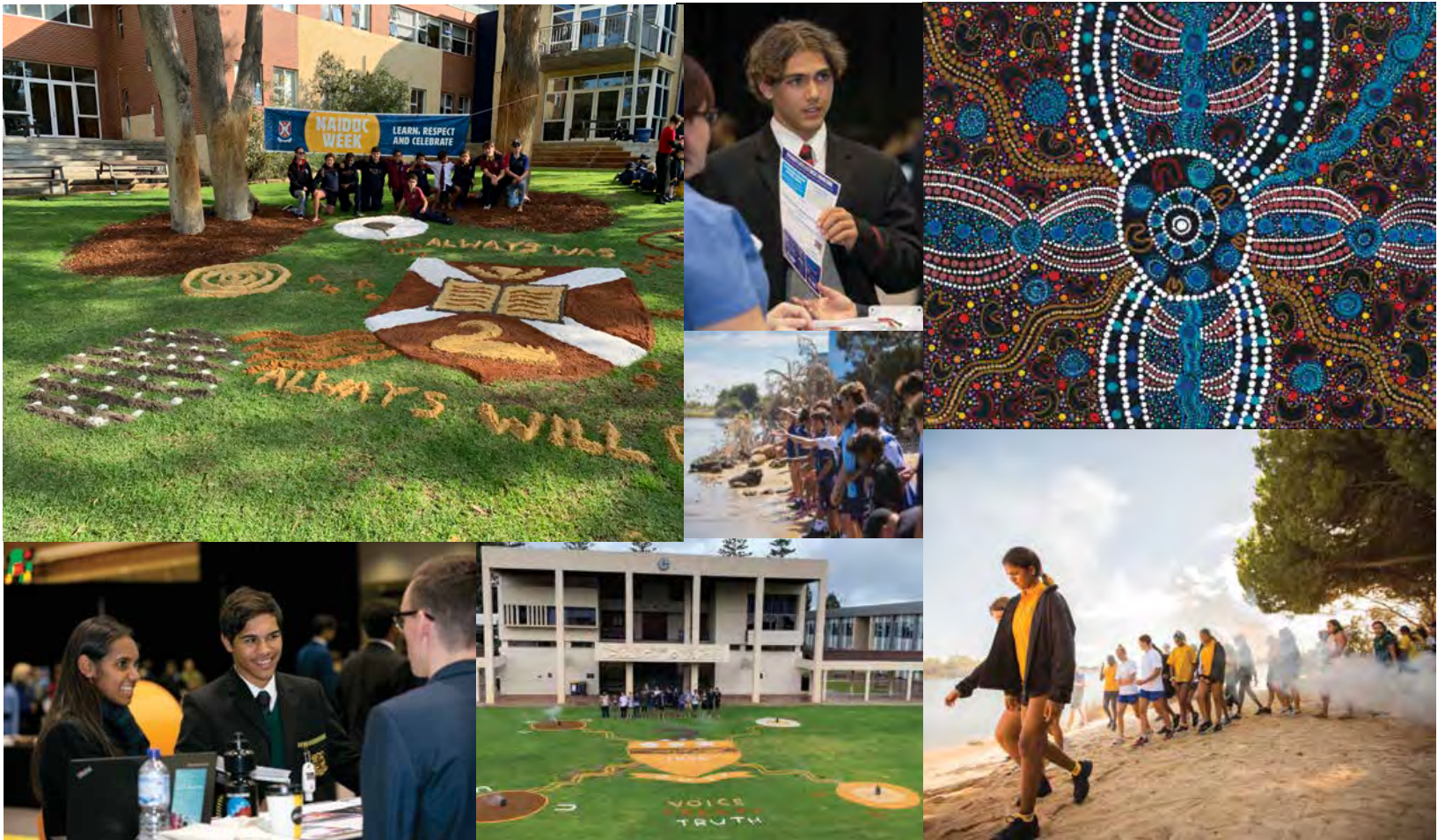


Future Footprints

The Future Footprints program is an initiative of the Association of Independent Schools Western Australia (AISWA) that began in 2004. The program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are attending one of the 17 participating schools in Perth. The program supports more than 400 students in years 7-12 from around Western Australia and interstate, from remote communities to urban metropolitan Perth. Since the program began there have been over 550 Aboriginal and Torres Strait students graduate Year 12 from the participating schools assisted by the program.

Future Footprints' primary focus is to increase school attendance, retention, grade progression and attainment of Year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in participating schools, through an Aboriginal family model that creates lasting support networks. Additionally, the program aims to improve the readiness of students transitioning from school to further education, training, or employment pathways. Alumni have gone on to be successful in a wide variety of occupations, and often return to the program as mentors and guest speakers.





The program works by acting as a support network for students, families, and schools, keeping them connected through a peer support network and Future Footprints run events. Schools receive support in cultural advice and navigation, and creating a network to rely on. The aim is to create a culturally safe space that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in mainstream schooling and encourages schools to engage with the different Aboriginal cultures brought into the schools by their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The program coordinates multiple events throughout the year that aim to bring together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This is done by building strong relationships between students and establish a support network in Perth, acting as a family for students while away from home. Future Footprints coordinates six main types of events, beginning the year with a Welcome to Country, a culturally significant event that welcomes students from many different nations to Whadjuk Noongar Country where they complete their schooling. This event sees up to 300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students come together and celebrate their heritage, with a smoking ceremony, storytelling, song, and dance.

Another significant event in the calendar is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Careers Expo, specifically tailored to our students and showcase further education and employment opportunities. The expo provides a range of options to students, including further employment and education opportunities, such as tertiary institutions, apprenticeships, scholarship opportunities, accommodation options, and employment providers. Further relationships are created through the Careers Expo that result in scholarships for students and sponsorship of events.

In 2019, 61 students under the Future Footprints program graduated from Year 12, with 84 per cent intending to undertake higher education. Future Footprints hosts a Graduation Dinner for the students from all participating schools to join together and celebrate their success.

70 per cent of students in the program are boarding students, and many live in remote areas which makes it difficult to travel home during midterm breaks when boarding houses close. Future Footprints runs a family atmosphere camp during these times to maintain student's engagement with education in Perth.

Future Footprints aims to mainstream Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and helps schools explore ways to include this in their curriculum, such as Aboriginal fire management in Science and Outdoor Education classes, or bringing the Stolen Generation into Humanities and Social Sciences and English classes.

Many schools run NAIDOC and reconciliation events, and the Future Footprints staff often assist schools to run these events, including empowering the students to bring some of their own culture to the school. Activities include sand murals, dance performances, creating artworks, community member visits, and special assemblies.

Future Footprints has run successfully for the past 16 years and we are witnessing significant positive generational change within Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. The program aims to continue well into the future to enable further empowerment and self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

For more information contact the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA):
 Phone: 08 9441 1600
 Email reception@ais.wa.edu.au
 Website: www.ais.wa.edu.au