

## LETTER FROM ANGLICARE VICTORIA AND THE LONG WALK: **HELPING AUSTRALIA'S INDIGENOUS YOUTH DREAM BIG**

**Dear Friends, Students,  
and Partners,**

As we prepare to launch the Buldau Yiooghen – Big Dreams Leadership Academy, we want to take a moment to share with you some reflections about the program, our partners, and, most importantly, the impressive young people we have had the privilege of having in the Academy.

When we think about these students, several words come to mind: Pride. Identity. Connection. Culture. Aspiration. Confidence. Capability. All of these words reflect one thing: Opportunity.

The Long Walk and Anglicare Victoria created the Buldau Yiooghen – Big Dreams Leadership Academy to encourage Australia's Indigenous youth to dream big. Often, programs that focus on Aboriginal young people take a "deficit approach": They seek to address challenges, remove barriers, and close gaps. We're taking a different tack. We recognise strengths, cultivate opportunities, ignite inspiration, fulfil dreams, and make connections that create the best possible outcomes for young Aboriginal leaders of the future—and for Australia herself.

The Academy is effective because we have formed partnerships

with iconic Australian cultural, sporting, and arts organisations that share our vision. Over the course of 10 days—including a five-day Southern Experience in Melbourne and a five-day Northern Experience in Darwin—students get the opportunity to engage on an equal level with leaders from these institutions, as well as Elders from community and cultural organisations. Whether it's sharing a yarn with an Essendon footballer, listening to Aunty Pam Pedersen tell her story, connecting with a mob from another part of Australia and learning about their cultural journey, these young people are learning more about themselves and their cultural identity, and getting the chance to dream big about their future.

It's not just the youth who are changed by this experience. By meeting kids from different mobs, listening to their stories, and hearing their dreams, our partners are seeing a new kind of potential: the potential for young Aboriginal leaders to contribute to their organisations by sharing their voice, ideas, skills, and capabilities. Our hope is that these organisations become more involved in the lives of these kids, and that these kids see opportunities for themselves

in some of Australia's most prominent institutions.

This newsletter highlights some of the people behind this program, including Aunty Pam, an Elder on the board of The Long Walk, and two alumni, Danae McDonald and Tanisha Lovett, who are well on their way to becoming leaders in their communities. We also share some data illustrating the impact of the Academy.

This program is new, but we have high hopes that it will influence how we engage Indigenous youth in Australia. Every young person deserves opportunity—and nothing is more important than the opportunity to dream big.

We hope you enjoy the stories in this newsletter. If you would like to learn more about the Academy, please get in touch.

Warmly,

**Paul McDonald**, Anglicare Victoria CEO, and **Leanne Brooke**, General Manager, The Long Walk



## CONVERSATION WITH AN ELDER: AUNTY PAM PEDERSEN



Yorta Yorta Elder Aunty Pam Pedersen has a motto: "If you can dream it, you can achieve it." This makes Aunty Pam—who serves on the board of directors for The Long Walk—the perfect ambassador for Buldau Yiooghen, which means "dream big" in Woiwurrung, the language of the Wurundjeri people.

The daughter of South Australia's first Aboriginal governor, Sir Douglas Nicholls, Aunty Pam has been dedicated to social justice for much of her life. Today, she works with youth, providing counsel and encouraging education in her role as an Elder on the Children's Koorie Court, County Koorie Court, Melbourne Magistrates Court, and Heidelberg Children's Court. She also works with adults through the Adult Parole Board of Australia.

For the past three years, Aunty Pam has served as an Elder and cultural adviser to the program, joining Academy campers for two programs. She took time out of her busy schedule after NAIDOC Week to talk to us about her role in the program, and the benefits the Academy delivers for both the young people and our partners.

### What do you think the Academy offers Aboriginal youth in Australia?

I just really love the program. I think it's really important for our students, and I don't think there are many programs quite like this one, with all of the various partners. It's wonderful when people come forward and say they would like to offer education and leadership programs to our youth.

In the program, there's a lot of learning. The students get to go into other cultures. They go to Darwin and listen to speakers talk about their culture. We all have different cultures, and it's lovely to learn about other cultures and how they handle things. We're all different. It's good for the students to pick this up and learn and experience the way we share. Even for myself—I still learn, too, from the youngies.

### What is your most memorable moment from the Academy?

I remember when we went to Darwin last year and had dinner with the Essendon footballers. The children loved it—they joked and loved being with the players and having the players mix with them. That's really important, when the players come away with us. They mix with the students and get to know them. And the students are up and asking questions because they haven't been with a lot of well-known footballers before. So it's very good for them: to show they're all one. We all mix together, and we have fun. And it's about respect, too.

### What is your impression of the young people in the Academy? What do you think they get out of the program?

I found the students amazing, especially because of the background they came from. To me, they were very special young people, whom I admired.

For many of them, they may not have been able to get this opportunity. And this might be the first time they've been away like

this, with others they don't know. So they're getting to know other students and forming friendships that are really important.

Each and every one of them is also getting the chance to contribute: listening and telling stories about themselves and where they come from, and the different things they do at school. When this happens, they understand that we're all equal, and we're all there to help one another.

### What is your role as an Elder and cultural adviser?

I'm there to help our young ones—to tell them our stories, to ask them about themselves, about their family, about their schooling. And then I tell them about myself—just sit down in a circle with them and have a yarn.

### And what is your hope for the partners who support the Academy?

I am thankful for the partners—especially those who offered places for the young people who are interested in taking on some of these traineeships. I hope the people who have given these students this opportunity feel very proud, because then the door is opened for another student to do exactly the same thing.

I also hope that some partners come along on a trip and see what takes place and see how the students are. Come to Darwin and see the culture there and get to know the students. See what the students do and some of the actions of these youth, because they are amazing students.

## MEET TWO ALUMNI: TANISHA LOVETT AND DANAE MCDONALD



**At the Buldau Yiooghen – Big Dreams Leadership Academy, we have had the privilege of hosting two young women from Horsham on two camps: Tanisha Lovett and Danae McDonald joined for our pilot program in 2015, and then they returned as mentors for the Academy last year.**

The young women, who are cousins, sat down with us at the Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative to share their story. Both talked about how the experience gave them a sense of community and connection to culture, and helped them realise that many supportive people are there to help them achieve their dreams.

"What I took from it the most is how many people in my community are there to assist me, and who I can take advice from—like the Elders," Danae said. Tanisha

added that the program reminded her how important it is to continue conversations with the Elders. "We have a beautiful culture, but a lot of knowledge has been lost over the years, so it's up to us youth to grab that knowledge from our Elders so that we can then pass that on down to ours," she said.

Tanisha and Danae also showed their cheeky side, joking with each other about being two girls from Victoria experiencing the hot weather and wild creatures of Northern Territory for the first time. Danae talked about her excitement seeing her first crocodile on a tour during the program outside Darwin. "I was ready to jump out of the boat and be like, 'Hi, buddy!'" Danae said. "And then knock the boat!" Tanisha teased.

## MEET TWO ALUMNI: TANISHA LOVETT AND DANAЕ MCDONALD (CONTINUED)

### Danae's Story: Expanding Her World and Helping People through Medicine

Bright and articulate, with a quick smile and a dimple in one cheek, Danae, a 17-year-old Wotjobaluk woman, is close to her family. Before she went on her first Academy camp, she was excited about traveling to a new state but also nervous about leaving her family. "It was the biggest trip I'd done alone without them," she said. "So that was a big stepping stone for me—to just leave and be independent."

As it turned out, Danae's eldest sister joined her on her first camp, and then her youngest sister came on the second one. Despite her reservations about leaving her family, Danae was excited, too. "These things don't come by often, and when they do, you grab it as soon as you can because it opens doors to a whole wide range of different opportunities later in life," she said.

The opportunity Danae wants to grab is medicine: After she completes year 12 in Horsham this year, she plans to study anaesthesiology at the University of Adelaide. "I've always wanted to go out in the world and help people, and I thought becoming a doctor would be one of the best ways to do that."

For Danae, the experience of attending the Academy helped her become comfortable with the idea of leaving home, expanding her world, and becoming her own person. "The program really showed me how much of a leader I can be to other people in the community," she said. "It gave me that opportunity to shine."

It also reminded Danae, who belongs to a dance group with her family, about the importance of continuing her cultural and family traditions, which she wants to share with her community and her kids later in life. She believes the Academy, with its emphasis on supporting Indigenous youth on their cultural journey, can help Aboriginal young people view their culture as an opportunity. "This program helps you accept your identity," she said. "There are a lot of people out there who don't want to, or don't have the opportunity to [connect with their culture], because doors close when they do. This program helps youth realise that accepting this can open a lot more doors than if you turn away from who you are and what your culture and community is."



### Tanisha's Story: Finding Her Voice and Sharing Her Art

Tanisha, a 20-year-old Gunditjmara Wotjobaluk woman, is soft-spoken and somewhat reserved. She confesses that she was very shy before she participated in the Academy. But the structure of the Academy—with people sharing their stories in small groups and with opportunities for the kids to talk with leaders, Elders and even famous footballers—encouraged Tanisha to overcome her fears.

Tanisha recalled one evening, when the kids shared a meal with the Essendon Football Club. "We got to sit and talk one-on-one and hear the players' stories," she said. "And then because I'm a bit of a graphic designer, they were trying to get me in touch with their [graphic designer], so they were giving out business cards and that."

That's when Tanisha realised she had something to offer to the community. "I shouldn't ever doubt myself," she said. "Everyone who was at the camp—they were there for me, and for each other. We're all there to look after each other. We're all going to be leaders."

Tanisha added that she thinks this is one of the main benefits of the Academy. "It shows Indigenous youth that they matter—that people are out there and they do want to help them get to where they want to be, wherever they want to be," she said. "There will be support for them."

Today, Tanisha becomes most animated when talking about her work as an artist. She started painting in a studio art class in secondary school, where her teacher encouraged her to try whatever subject she wanted. She decided to try Aboriginal dot painting. She particularly likes the big statement pieces, and she admires the work of Aboriginal artist and activist Richard Bell.

Tanisha has a quiet pride in her work—as she should: her designs have been featured in merchandise for the Indigenous youth mentorship program AIME Australia, as well as on the cover of a report for Vision 2020. About one of her prints, Coming Together, which AIME is selling on its website, Tanisha writes: "This is a story to do with different clan groups putting differences aside for the greater good. Even now, in the present, we come together in different colours, shapes, and sizes, because it always was and always will be Aboriginal land."

Tanisha's painting from the Vision 2020 report, Rainbow Serpent Dreaming, is displayed prominently in the Goolum Goolum lobby, where Tanisha is doing a traineeship in health promotion, putting her art



and design skills to use by developing flyers, posters, and newsletters. She also serves as a mentor for the younger kids. This experience is putting Tanisha on the path to the future she wants. "Growing up, I always wanted to work with community and my people coming from Wotjobaluk land, and I'm already doing that," she said.

### Watching Danae and Tanisha Become Leaders

Dean O'Loughlin, Goolum Goolum's health and well-being manager, has noticed a subtle change in Danae and Tanisha since they have attended the two leadership academies. Reflecting on watching the two of them talk at a recent event with the partners, Dean said it was the first time he had heard them speak with such confidence and power.

"Danae was so well-versed in talking about herself, her own journey, and her culture in front of some very accomplished and successful people," he said. "Then Tanisha got up and talked about her journey and her art, and there wasn't a dry eye in the house. I think this program has been a great platform for them to have their voice heard. It has given them an opportunity to have a voice, to present to their peers, and to be seen as a leader."

# OUR IMPACT

**In establishing the Buldau Yiooghen – Big Dreams Leadership Academy, we aim to inspire and support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to:**

- Make good decisions about their ongoing health and wellness.
- Set personal goals.
- Develop a resilient approach to learning and development.
- Engage positively with formal education—to complete year 12 and undertake further study or training.
- Grow as leaders in their communities and to serve as mentors to future Academy students.

**We have been pleased with the impact of the program to date. Here are some of the highlights based on surveys of the 41 students who have completed the Academy in 2017 or who are currently participating in the 2018 Academy:**

- Of the participants who are school age, 100 percent of academy members are still attending school.
- Of the post-year 12 participants, 95 percent are either working full time or pursuing further education through university or TAFE.
- 85 percent are volunteering at local Aboriginal co-operative or community organisations.
- 2 participants have become school captains.
- 1 participant is representing Australia nationally as part of the AFL's Flying Boomerangs football development and leadership program.

# MESSAGES FROM OUR PARTNERS

## **Australian National Academy of Music:**

Thanks so very much to Anglicare for bringing the fine young people of the Buldau Yiooghen – Big Dreams Leadership Academy for an afternoon of music and story-sharing at the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM). Having an opportunity to share our stories to these young people, and to show them a bit of what we do in the world of music making was an honour.

—**Charlotte Cassidy**, Business, People, and Culture Manager, Australian National Academy of Music

## **Federation University Australia:**

We are so proud and privileged to have been asked to be the educational partners for the Buldau Yiooghen – Big Dreams Leadership Academy. The opportunity to work alongside leading organisations like Anglicare, Tennis Australia, and The Long Walk to engage with young Aboriginal kids is a major step forward for our future planning and engagement here at FedUni and the AEC.

—**Jasmine Graham**, Aboriginal Education Centre, Federation University Australia

## **Opera Australia:**

Opera Australia was thrilled to spend time with the Buldau Yiooghen – Big Dreams Leadership Academy during their Southern Experience in Melbourne. It was a great chance to talk to the students about their interests and passions and share a bit about the different opportunities and career options available in the performing arts.

—**Penny McCabe**, Associate Producer, Touring, Opera Australia

## **Tennis Australia:**

Tennis Australia was delighted to be invited to partner with Anglicare Victoria and the Buldau Yiooghen – Big Dreams Leadership Academy to create opportunities for Aboriginal Australians to engage in leadership roles in our sport. Following a recent visit from the Academy, a youth member from the group has joined us in a work-placement role in the human resources department, as part of our commitment to providing employment pathways for members of the Academy and Indigenous youth. Looking ahead, we are excited to be hosting the Academy at our Inaugural National Indigenous Tennis Carnival in Darwin this September.

—**Kerry Tavrou**, Head of Tennis Inclusion, Tennis Australia

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OUR FOCUS IS ON TRANSFORMING  
THE FUTURES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE, FAMILIES AND ADULTS. OUR WORK  
IS BASED ON THREE GUIDING PILLARS,  
PREVENT, PROTECT, EMPOWER.

**BETTER  
TOMORROWS**