Yalari

The Social Impact of Yalari

WHAT WE DO

Since 2005, Yalari has been providing Indigenous children from regional and remote communities across Australia the opportunity to receive a full boarding school scholarship for their entire secondary education.

We believe education is the key to generational change and a brighter future for Indigenous Australians and for our nation. We are deeply committed to the ongoing success of our national program of scholarships, student support and post-school opportunities.

In 2024, Yalari has 248 students on secondary school scholarships nationally. In addition, we have a group of 536 alumni studying at universities, working or undertaking further training. Each year Yalari interviews prospective applicants and awards 50-60 scholarships.

Yalari's Rosemary Bishop Indigenous Education Scholarship provides opportunities for Indigenous children to learn, dream, achieve and succeed. A scholarship covers full boarding and tuition costs to attend one of Australia's leading boarding schools from Year 7 through to Year 12. In addition to gaining a high-quality academic education, Yalari scholars are also exposed to extracurricular sporting, vocational and life experiences that they might otherwise never encounter.

Yalari works in partnership with children and their families, donors and sponsors, supporters, partner schools, and the community at large – all who have a role in the success of the program.

Scholarship applications are received from families who have determined boarding school is the right choice for their family.

Both children and parents are involved in the application process including in an on-country interview where Yalari staff meet with prospective applicants in their own home community. Successful applicants are chosen based on academic effort, participation in leadership, sport and extracurricular activities, family support and communication in interviews with Yalari and partner school staff.

In 2024, Yalari partners with 19 secondary schools in 8 Australian states/territories.

Between 2005-2024 810 Yalari scholarships have been awarded.

7 students completed the first Yalari Ready Program in 2024.

Yalari's unprecedented level of support for all scholarship students is a key strength of our unique model and contributes to our high retention rates. We have a passionate team of staff throughout Australia who support our students, their families and our partner schools daily.

Opportunities for Yalari students to catch-up with each other, seek support or advice and undertake personal development are offered throughout the year by way of camps, workshops, events and other activities.

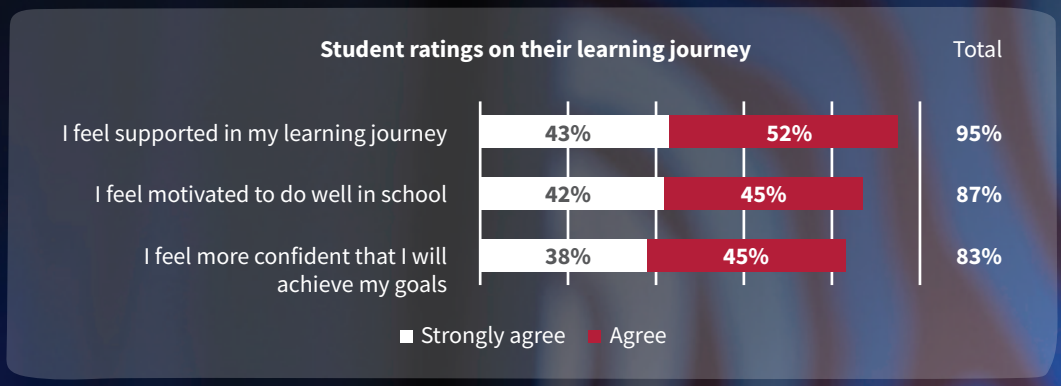
The Yalari Ready Program is a new initiative that commenced in 2024 to support a select number of children with significant gaps in their education that would ordinarily prelude them from participation in the Rosemary Bishop Indigenous Education Scholarship. Yalari Ready is a 12-month program of focussed numeracy and literacy skills development run in conjunction with a partner school to prepare students academically for a high school level education. Successful participants are eligible to apply for a Yalari Scholarship entering Year 7.

As students commence their senior years, they are provided with post school support and become part of our Pathways Program.

The Pathways Program provides events such as the Year 11 'My Futures' camp, Year 12 transition planning workshop, graduation celebration weekend, senior school dinners, senior leaders camp, career guidance, university partnerships, driving program, and financial scholarships to assist with the cost of living while at university.

STUDENT VOICES

ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



"I have gained an extensive amount of resilience, both through moving away from home but also with my academic journey and getting through challenges with the much-appreciated support of the Yalari team and my amazing Student Support Officer."

"I really want to make a difference. It's my biggest goal. I don't care where - my town, another town, or Parliament House. Something must change, and I want to be the one to change it. It's my biggest driver."

MEASURING

OUR SOCIAL IMPACT

In 2024, Yalari partnered with the Centre for Social Impact (CSI) at the University of Western Australia to investigate key outcomes the Yalari program has achieved over nearly two-decades of operations. The study sought to identify how Yalari's unique vision, purpose and values underpin a working model that seeks tangible progress towards generation change for Indigenous children from regional and remote communities.

The study utilised a mixed method approach where students and alumni participated in yarning circles and surveys; sponsor, donors, supporters, Yalari and partner school staff were interviewed; and program data was used to track progress and personal achievements throughout and beyond the scholarship program.

Short, medium and long term outcomes for students and alumni, families, and schools were selected to track the overall social impact.

Our Vision

Yalari's vision is to be one of Australia's great enduring educational and leadership foundations empowering Indigenous people from regional and remote Australia.

Our Purpose

To create equitable opportunities and outcomes for successive generations of Indigenous children.

To develop leading programs educating and supporting Yalari's students and alumni, individually and collectively, as qualified, contributing, culturally connected and influential Australians.

To honour all Australians by sharing Indigenous cultures through stories, healing, laughter and truth.

Our CORRIE Values

Key Impacts

Yalari has accepted 810 students (64% female, 36% male) into the scholarship program from 187 communities across all states and territories in Australia, the majority of these starting in the first year of high school as per scholarship entry requirements.*

Of these students, 68.8% went on to complete Year 12 at their respective boarding schools. This does not include many others who, bolstered by the quality education received during their time at boarding school, went on to complete Year 12 in their home community after an early exit from the scholarship program.

By way of comparison, ABS data shows the cohort retention rate for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in 2023 was 55.9%, with the current study highlighting Yalari's cohort retention rate for the same period as 67.4%. It must be noted that Yalari's cohort is only students from regional and remote Australia.

**Yalari accepted a number of transfer students from the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program in 2010 that were in grades other than the first year of high school.*

The study further identified that Yalari students who reach Year 10 are significantly more likely to complete high school than the overall population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students.

In ABS data showing retention for students in Year 10-12 for 2023, the national retention rate across all Australian students was 78.7% with the Indigenous student retention rate 55.9%. Notably, Yalari achieved a 81.1% retention rate across the same period. The 2023 retention rate for Yalari is not an outlier, with an impressive average Year 10 to 12 retention rate of 84.1% since inception.

69%

69% of our students who start Year 7, complete Year 12, which is above the national average of 56% for all other Indigenous students regardless of where they live.

95% **95% of our students* feel inspired to be a role model and leader for their family and community.**

81% **81% of our students feel more connected to their culture due to the support of the Yalari program.**

THE KEY IMPACTS FOR SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS

- Educational opportunity and empowerment
- Emotional and social wellbeing
- Cultural connection and identity
- Social connections and peer support

In addition to gaining a quality boarding school academic education, the study showed that Yalari students are gaining valuable leadership skills, making mature decisions, taking initiative, building and maintaining good relationships, learning time management and organisational skills, being mentored and mentoring others, and are connecting to one other in meaningful ways.

The leadership, personal skills, resilience and self-confidence gained were shown to be strongly tied to cultural identity and pride, social connections, and holistic wellbeing support gained through the scholarship program.

Maintaining and fostering a strong cultural identity has been an important element of the Yalari program since the beginning. The study found that this continues to be a central tenant of the program.

Of the students surveyed, 97% felt cultural pride and 81% felt more connected to their culture due to the support of the Yalari program. The evaluation also found that Yalari students are experiencing high levels of wellbeing, feel valued, respected, and accepted by other students and staff at their school.

THE KEY SOCIAL IMPACTS FOR ALUMNI

- Empowerment
- Maintaining connection with Yalari
- Leadership
- Career readiness and preparedness
- Attaining career goals

The study indicates that Yalari alumni, on the whole, go on to further study or employment with 99% of alumni survey participants indicating as such.

Career readiness and preparedness was found to be influenced by a range of factors, including their school experience, community and identity, personal doubts and limitations, and the motivation to create academic and career goals.

Despite the challenges most Yalari alum report; their education experience has had a positive impact on their decision to pursue further education or work. 70% of alumni surveyed (representing 18.4% of the total Alumni) pursued further studies by engaging in either higher education (e.g. university) or VET pathways (e.g. TAFE) once they graduated from school. It should be noted that Yalari classify all former students as Alum, regardless of if they completed the scholarship through to graduation.

The Yalari Pathways program has continued to grow and develop in recent years, so understanding current students and recent graduates experience was important to the current study. Of the current cohort of Year 11 and 12 students' respondents to the survey, 95% overwhelming agreed/strongly agreed they were motivated to pursue their post-school career goals.

99% of Yalari scholars transition to university, further education or employment post graduation

71% of alumni* who have graduated in the past 5 years have transitioned to higher education

A common theme from parents interviewed was the immense trust in the Yalari program and staff. Many parents praised Yalari for maintaining regular communication and knowing students and their families on a personal level. In addition, parents described their children as role models to younger family and community members, promoting the pursuit and importance of education.

All parents interviewed suggested they would have no reservations about recommending Yalari.

Partner school staff reported observing shifts towards more cultural awareness within their respective schools. Sponsors and donors also reported this occurring in businesses where they employ Yalari graduates, or where they sponsor a Yalari scholarship.

ALUMNI LEADERSHIP, INSPIRATION AND RECIPROCITY

98% 98% of Alumni felt that Yalari has inspired them to help others

95% 95% of Alumni felt that Yalari has inspired them to be a role model for family and community

93% 93% of Alumni felt that Yalari has inspired them to be a role model for other Yalari students

ALUMNI VOICES

"Yalari had a great focus on leadership throughout my schooling. Having older Yalari students and alumni speak to us in the younger years inspired me to be a leader, a leader for the next generation of Yalari students, but also for younger siblings."

"The camps provided by Yalari, particularly through Years 10 to 12 helped me gain confidence to continue my studies and apply for university. I want to get my graduate certificates in Indigenous Health, and Child and Family Health so I can return to rural areas like home and provide a wide range of services to these Indigenous communities."

Driving sustained impact

Yalari believes it takes a whole community to educate a child. The social impact study highlights the programs' ability to empower Indigenous young people to thrive while maintaining a strong sense of self and cultural identity. The impact for communities and wider society is a network of educated, connected Indigenous leaders confidently driving change for themselves, their families and communities, and the next generation.

This has been achieved by Yalari being uniquely equipped to address the specific challenges faced by children and young people from regional and remote communities who lack access to quality education and support. By creating ongoing and dynamic partnerships between families, communities, schools, donors, sponsors, Government, and industry partners, Yalari is well placed to continue driving change well into the future.

"We are committed to making a difference and being part of generational change for Indigenous children in Australia. I am very proud that we are able to share how Yalari is creating such a wide range of impact for individuals, communities and partners. As a collective group of committed Australians, we are making a positive change together."

Waverley Stanley AM
Founding Director, Yalari

Opportunities to grow our impact

The study identified three key opportunities that will support Yalari to fulfil its vision and purpose. These are part of our 2025 strategic goals as we build and grow our collective impact.

1. Additional health and wellbeing initiatives to support scholarship students to feel a strong sense of belonging, confidence, and cultural connection while at boarding school. To complement Yalari's tried and tested model of individual student support which places Student Support Officers in every partner school, Yalari is developing and rolling out the Thrive program in 2025 that will capture and support the unique needs of every individual scholarship student throughout their boarding school journey.

2. A vibrant Pathways Program so Yalari scholarship holders are supported in career readiness during senior years and alumni are supported to gain qualifications and work opportunities after they graduate. The program activities should ensure students continue to be supported by Yalari staff and by a peer support network of inspired, influential, and educated individuals. The Yalari Pathways program is being expanded to incorporate programming adequate for the increasing number of Yalari alumni and to cater for the individual hopes and dreams of our graduating students.

3. Stronger relationships with partner schools to support an environment that is conducive to our students' continued learning, growing and thriving. The goal is to foster a culturally safe and responsive environment that benefits all students and ensures our scholarship students have a positive and uplifting educational experience. The Yalari Student Support team are developing systems for greater integration and engagement of the Yalari program into the heart of partner schools.

***Survey participants** were 101 (64 female and 37 male) students currently in Years 7 to 12; 100 alumni. 39 respondents (7 male, 32 female) were aged between 17 and 22 (graduated 5 years ago or less), and a further 61 respondents (22 male, 39 female) were aged between 23 and 40 (graduated at least 5 years ago); and 33 school academic and boarding staff from Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. **Yarning circles participants** were 27 students (13 female and 14 male across five partner schools), and 15 Alumni (8 female and 7 male). **Interview participants** were 9 parents/guardians, 5 school staff, 8 sponsors and supporters and 10 Yalari staff.

BECOME PART OF YALARI'S STORY

We are seeking supporters that share our vision to deliver authentic, practical, outcomes-driven solutions that will allow Indigenous young people to write their own future in a nation where we all stand together as equals.

For more information, contact **info@yalari.org**.

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CELEBRATING 20 YEARS