



2021 ANNUAL SCHOLAR REPORT

THE BIBBULMUN FUND SCHOLARSHIP



2021 Pinnacle scholar cohort



THE PINNACLE PROGRAM

There is a common misconception that since Australia achieved marriage equality, life for young LGBTIQ+ people became much easier. For some that may be true, but not for many.

Many young LGBTIQ+ Australians continue to face family, faith, and community rejection because of how they identify. Discrimination, bullying, and abuse are commonly reported in these situations. This often results in needing to leave unsupportive environments (home/community) leading to a greater risk of homelessness. Sustained discrimination, bullying and abuse leads to high rates of self-harm and psychological distress. A lack of visible LGBTIQ+ role models may compound a sense of helplessness/worthlessness. A lack of money means education is subjugated to the need to find paid employment.

A societal perception (particularly in more progressive communities) that the achievement of marriage equality has led to widespread community acceptance of the LGBTIQ+ community is flawed. It overlooks that a significant minority of Australians do not embrace the LGBTIQ+ community – often attributable to a lack of understanding/LGBTIQ+ exposure, cultural and faith beliefs and similar. The surprise expressed in more progressive communities when young LGBTIQ+ Australians share the enormous burden and angst they feel when “coming out” reinforces this paradigm.

LGBTIQ+ Health Australia research finds that young adults in the LGBTIQ+ community are still between five and 11 times more likely to attempt self-harm or experience psychological distress directly related to experiences of stigma, prejudice, discrimination, bullying or abuse.

We also understand from research conducted by the Mitchell Institute in 2017 that low self-esteem, family disruption and severe peer victimisation are critical factors that make it difficult for young people to complete their education – at great personal cost and at great cost to our wider society.

It is here where The Pinnacle Foundation makes a difference.

The Pinnacle Foundation provides educational scholarships, mentoring and opportunities for young LGBTIQ+ Australians to realise their full potential and overcome challenges arising from their identity.

Our vision is for a more diverse and inclusive society with visible LGBTIQ+ role models.



YEAR IN REVIEW

The past year has continued to present unforeseen challenges. Despite these, Pinnacle scholars continue to demonstrate incredible resilience, commitment and determination. We are deeply grateful to the mentors and other volunteers who continue to provide wise counsel and sustained support to the Pinnacle scholar cohort across every state and territory.

Thanks to your incredible generosity, and the support of other donors and partners, and the tireless and skilled efforts of so many volunteers in the Pinnacle family, we achieved record income, enabling us to again grow the number of scholarships we award. In 2022 we will support a total 72 scholars, up from 51 in 2021, 44 in 2020 and 29 in 2019.

Every scholar will be carefully matched with a mentor who will have trod the scholar's path – and provide the encouragement, counsel, and inspiration to support the scholar's rounded development and successful completion of their studies.

Over the course of the past year, with extensive pro bono support, we rolled out a new brand for The Pinnacle Foundation, launched a new website and deployed Microsoft Office 365, complementing the customer relationship management system and scholar selection software that we implemented the year prior. These initiatives underpin the growth of the Pinnacle program.

In line with the Pinnacle value of giving back and being part of a community, we saw increasing numbers of Pinnacle alumni generously giving of their time (and in some cases, funds) to support the Pinnacle program. And from a donor perspective, we have seen our register of planned givers grow – as members of our community seek to make legacy commitments to support the education of future generations of LGBTIQ+ Australians.

2021 has also been a year of change, and we recognise the significant contribution that Paul Zahra made to the development of The Pinnacle Foundation since joining the Foundation's Board in 2015 and becoming Chair in 2016. Paul successfully guided Pinnacle's growth, reach, impact and sustainability. The Pinnacle Foundation Board voted to honour Paul with recognition as our Founding Chair.

We welcomed Claire Spencer AM as our new Chair. Claire was previously our Deputy Chair and has been a member of the Pinnacle Board since 2017. Claire's appointment was warmly welcomed.

We acknowledge Dr Jim Sait and thank him for his sustained contribution as a volunteer with The Pinnacle Foundation since 2011. As Mentor Manager, Jim adroitly managed the identification, selection and ongoing engagement of our national mentor cohort, as well as being extensively involved in the selection of Pinnacle scholars.

And finally, we pay tribute to the incredible resilience and commitment of our scholars across the country. It is through them, and through those who went before them, that we will realise our vision for a more diverse and inclusive society with visible LGBTIQ+ role models.



SCHOLAR COHORT

2022 Scholars

We will support a total of 72 scholars in 2022: 44 new scholars (compared to 19 new scholars in 2021) and 28 returning scholars. This number is largest number of scholars in the history of The Pinnacle Foundation.

Overview of the 2022 Scholar Cohort

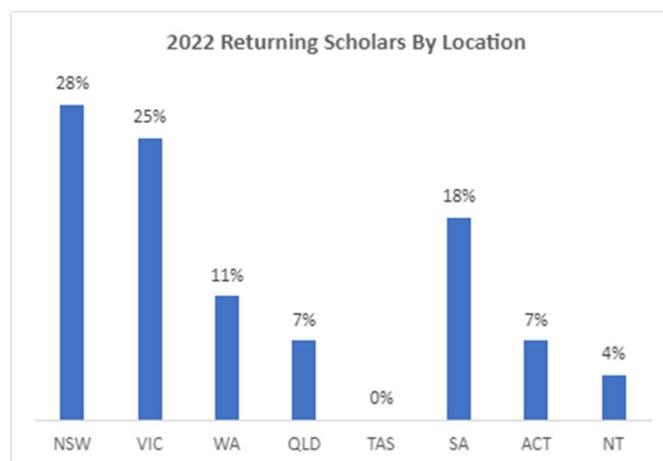
The 2022 new scholar cohort has the largest volume of scholars originating from both Victoria (29%) and NSW (27%). Western Australia has a 14% representation of new scholars due to the large number of available named scholarships for Western Australian applicants and this trend is also reflected in Queensland which has a 16% share of new scholars for 2022.

The graphs below highlight the percentages of scholars by state/territory in 2022, 2021 and the total scholar cohort amalgamating the new and returning scholar data.

2022 New Scholar Cohort By Location



2022 Returning Scholars By Location





2022 Total Scholar Cohort By Location



The below table shows the number of *total 2022 scholars* in comparison to the proportion of the Australian population per state/ territory. A ratio of 1.0 reflects the scholar cohort mirrored in the proportion of the Australian population in that jurisdiction. A ratio of less than 1.0 would reflect fewer than expected based on population share.

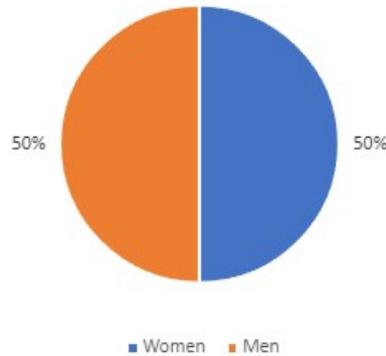
State	Population (millions) per ABS at 31 March 2021	%	Projected 2022 Scholars	%	Ratio
NSW	8176.4	31.81%	20	27.78%	0.87
VIC	6648.6	25.87%	19	26.39%	1.02
QLD	5206	20.25%	11	15.28%	0.75
SA	1771.7	6.89%	6	8.33%	1.21
WA	2675.8	10.41%	9	12.50%	1.20
TAS	542	2.11%	2	2.78%	1.32
NT	247	0.96%	1	1.39%	1.45
ACT	431.8	1.68%	4	5.56%	3.31
Total	25704.3	100.0%	72	100.00%	

The total 2022 scholar cohort sees an equitable scholar representation amongst the states with all states and territories being represented, including the Northern Territory. There has been a shift towards an increased representation in Western Australia due to the number of available scholarships for that state.

The sex assigned at birth of the 2022 scholar cohort is evenly split (overleaf).



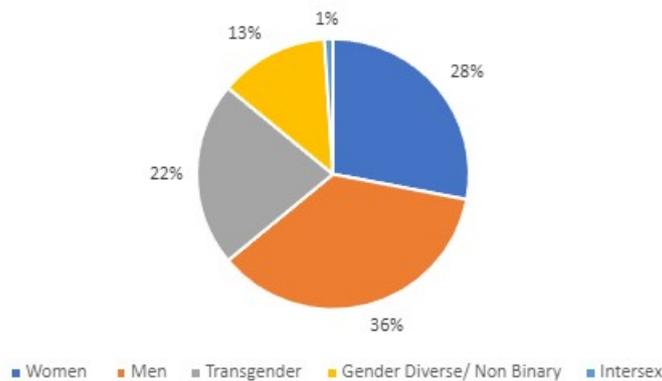
2022 Scholars Sex Assigned At Birth



When looking the scholars' *current* gender identity, you will see that proportion identifying as women drops significantly in the 2022 total scholar cohort. This trend is also reflected in scholars identifying as men, thus showing a more even balance between those identifying as women, men, transgender, and gender diverse in the final cohort figures. The decrease in scholars identifying as female implies that those scholars assigned women at birth are over-represented in the range of non-binary gender identities (non-binary and genderfluid) and/or now identify as transgender.

We can see that in the final 2022 scholar cohort group we have achieved a diverse representation across genders including those which were under-represented in the past, such as scholars identifying as Non-Binary, Intersex and Gender Fluid/Gender Diverse.

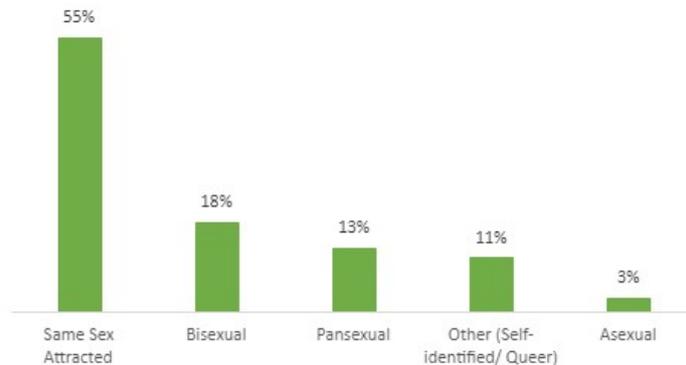
2022 Total Scholar Cohort By Gender



For 2022, there was a greater representation amongst the new scholars' sexual orientation with those who are same sex attracted making up the highest proportion of representation (55%), followed by bisexual scholars (18%) and pansexual scholars (13%). For 2022, we also have asexual scholar representation (3%) which has been missing in the past.



2022 Total Scholars By Sexual Orientation



Other key demographic data shows –

- For the 2022 new scholar cohort, we attracted ten additional culturally and linguistically diverse new scholars. This was an improvement on the two additional culturally and linguistically diverse scholars we attracted for the 2021 cohort.
- We have one additional Indigenous scholar in the 2022 new scholar cohort and a total of three Indigenous scholars in 2022, with two of our 2021 Indigenous scholars completing their studies.
- 52% of our 2022 new scholars indicated that they come from a regional, rural or remote area.
- For the 2022 new scholar cohort, we have attracted 15 (34%) new scholars who are first in their families to attend a tertiary institution. This equity factor shows that The Pinnacle Foundation is not only making a difference in the individual scholar's life, but also that of their extended community.

ARE WE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

As in 2020, all of Pinnacle's 2021 scholar cohort are on track to successfully complete their studies for the year. We note, however, that one scholar who was awarded scholarship funds did not spend them and, despite repeated encouragement, did not maintain a relationship with their mentor and the Foundation. Despite this, we understand they have successfully completed their studies for the year.

In 2021, we re-conducted the *Are We Making a Difference?* research project (triennial research) to better understand the academic achievements, personal development, and experiences of young LGBTIQ+ Australians awarded Pinnacle Foundation scholarships.

The research explored whether respondents had completed their studies, whether they were working in a field related to their course, whether they felt academically supported by The Pinnacle Foundation, whether their participation in the scholarship program had supported them to achieve their academic goals, their level of satisfaction with their mentor relationships, and whether they would recommend Pinnacle to potential future scholars.



95% of the respondents have completed their course (52%) or are continuing their studies (43%)

76% of the respondents who have completed their studies are currently working in an industry related to their course

92% of respondents felt that The Pinnacle Foundation helped them achieve their academic goals

98% of respondents stated that they feel academically supported by The Pinnacle Foundation

89% of respondents rated the relationship with their mentors as being beneficial to extremely beneficial

98% of respondents stated that they would recommend The Pinnacle Foundation to other potential scholars



THEORY OF CHANGE

In 2021, we developed a Theory of Change. It highlights the direct impact of the Pinnacle program on the lives of the young LGBTIQ+ Australians, as well as our focus to achieve systemic (societal) change. This happens in two main ways:

1. As the number of Pinnacle alumni grows, they are increasingly spreading their influence (the multiplier effect) to generate positive change. The Pinnacle program seeks to maintain active engagement with Pinnacle alumni to maximise the Pinnacle alumni multiplier effect.
2. The Pinnacle program embraces a model which encourages scholars and alumni to (where it is safe for them to do so) share their stories and the impact of the Pinnacle program. To maximise the extent and reach of the scholar/alumni stories, The Pinnacle Foundation relies on the involvement of corporate partners. When Pinnacle's corporate partners seek to leverage their involvement with Pinnacle by using scholar/alumni stories to engage their workforces, suppliers and customers, and encourage personal reflection about the importance of LGBTIQ+ inclusion and belonging, it also helps realise The Pinnacle Foundation's vision for a more diverse and inclusive society with visible LGBTIQ+ role models.

Theory of Change Model



(We have attached the complete Theory of Change document along with this Annual Scholar Report.)



COMPLETING SCHOLAR: DYLAN BARNES (THEY/ THEM)



For our end of year update, we interviewed our returning and new scholars, aiming to provide you with an insight into their dreams, goals, aspirations, and notable achievements.

What achievements are you most proud of this year?

This year I am very proud some key achievements that include being commissioned by Super Rugby New South Wales to paint an artwork for their website. I am so proud to be able to showcase my work on such a large platform. I was awarded the Deadly Second Place Highest Academic Achievement for a Third-Year award. I made it to the Macquarie University 2021 Merit List (for having an average mark

over 85) and I finally graduated! I am beyond thrilled to have finished my course and to finally be able to work in my chosen field and what a better way to start my career than being approved for casual/part-time employment at my dream job as a Researcher in the Indigenous Studies Department at Macquarie University. This year has been difficult, with the extended lockdown and a global pandemic, battling lack of motivation and other challenges. I overcame these challenges to finish my course so strongly through seeking out support for my mental and emotional well-being by reaching out to my support systems such as my psychologist, my friends and extended network of support. I am very proud of my success this year and every challenge I have faced and overcome. I have proven to myself how resilient I am and how much I can overcome with the right support around me.

How would you like to contribute to the world after you graduate?

I would like to contribute to the field of Indigenous Queer Studies as much as I can and utilise my unique perspective and dedication. I want to use my lived experience to contribute to any Indigenous queer organisations so that other Indigenous LGBTIQ+ youth can achieve things greater than those before them. I want to be the representation that I lacked when I was younger, and I want to actively work towards breaking the intergenerational trauma cycle and changing outcomes for my own family/friends and communities.

What are your career aspirations, hopes and dreams?

My ultimate career aspirations, hopes and dreams are to do academic research in the field of Indigenous Queer Studies, particularly land-based engagements/relationships, and Aboriginal art. I want to keep pursuing my career in Aboriginal art and I hope to improve this by completing Cert III's in Visual Art and Fashion Design at Tafe in 2022. I



want to start designing my own range of clothing as a side career using my own art and designs.

In what ways has The Pinnacle Foundation scholarship supported you to achieve your aspirations, hopes and dreams?

The scholarship has given me peace of mind throughout my poor mental health episodes as I did not have to worry as much about generating an income and working. My scholarship funds have paid for medication, many of my university books which are incredibly useful for my research career, and a new computer and monitors which will greatly improve my productivity and results. The ability to purchase the necessary tools I need to complete my studies has given me the opportunity to be on equal footing with my peers, the opportunity to be able to give my all to my course without being held back by lack of resources, or lack of time, through trying to earn an income instead of studying.

What has been surprising about the process of receiving this scholarship?

I was so pleasantly surprised at how accommodating and supportive the staff at Pinnacle have been! Major shout out to Sophie Wilde (NSW Scholar Liaison), Sam Brand (Scholar and Mentor Manager), and Nicholas Steepe (Rural, Regional and Remote Scholar Liaison). These three wonderful individuals have been endlessly supportive and always receptive to my situation. They have provided advice, kindness and guidance when I have need it and they have also provided friendship, which has been monumentally important to me during my time as a scholar.

How has receiving this scholarship helped your overall well-being?

The Pinnacle Foundation has been fantastic! Sophie was particularly helpful when I was experiencing a lot of gender dysphoria during one of my episodes and we were able to discuss it in a safe and genuine environment. The mentoring has given me hope to see that Indigenous queer people can achieve high positions (like Braden Hill). We have been able to connect on a genuine and professional level and my mentors and Pinnacle's support has given me a renewed hope to reach for the stars and create better pathways for queer youth. Because of my improved well-being and because of the support from Pinnacle, I have been able to take part in various leadership opportunities such as becoming the Treasurer of the Macquarie University Queer Collective from 2020-2021. I have also been the event coordinator of the Macquarie University Indigenous Student Association from 2020-2021.

Message of gratitude:

I extend my highest gratitude to the Bibbulmun Fund for giving me the opportunity to succeed and achieve things I would never have imagined. The support you and The Pinnacle Foundation have provided me extends far beyond my studies, and I have grown into a far more confident person with greater direction in my personal and professional life. This scholarship has opened my eyes to a world of possibilities where my dream of working to support other young LGBTIQ+ Indigenous Australians seems possible, achievable, and reachable. I am forever grateful for your support.



INCOMING SCHOLAR: BRAYDEN COCKROFT (HE/ HIM)



Hello, my name is Brayden, and I am currently studying a Bachelor of Science (Exercise and Sport Science) at Edith Cowan University. I am commencing my first year in 2022 at the Joondalup Campus. I have a great passion for sport, especially basketball and Australian Football League. I love sport because of the team spirit and comradery that comes along with participating in sport.

I am the first in my family to attend university and as a result of that my parents have always made a big emphasis on the importance of education due to the fact that they both work in very low-income careers. As the first person to

attend a tertiary institution, I have not had anyone to reach out to for advice on effective study methods, managing university life, and navigating the world of tertiary education – all of which I have had to find and learn myself. By being of Aboriginal descent, as a white male, I have experienced some struggles with not fitting in to indigenous communities and have experienced discrimination within school and out of school from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities as I don't 'fit in' to either group.

My current career goals involve either becoming a high school physical education teacher or even becoming a physiotherapist, especially one who works with professional sporting teams or teenage sporting leagues.

With being a teacher, I hope to educate the next generation and make increasing awareness especially for LGBTIQ+ people's health, teaching them what was not taught to me because of a school curriculum which has limited LGBTIQ+ resources. I would also like to help make a change in terms of teenage fitness. Because of the current path we are on with this generation, which is growing increasingly lazy, I would like to help motivate and increase teenage interest in sport and hopefully I can inspire young people to have a love for sport like I have.

With being a physiotherapist, I hope to help prevent and manage injuries for people to help them get back into action quickly and maintain a high level of fitness and be a support network for those who are struggling with injuries which they have gotten through sport. As an LGBTIQ+ physiotherapist, I hope to provide services to support LGBTIQ+ individuals and give them a safe environment for sporting recovery.

Thank you to The Bibbulmun Fund for this scholarship. I am very appreciative of your support and for the opportunities that will come as a result from receiving this scholarship during my university years and beyond. With this scholarship and my place in the Pinnacle Family, I hope to represent my community, the Bibbulmun Fund and The

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<https://thepinnaclefoundation.org/>

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Pinnacle Foundation in a positive way to make everyone involved proud of me now and into the future.

THANK YOU

Thank you for your generous support of The Pinnacle Foundation to provide educational scholarships, mentoring and opportunities for young LGBTIQ+ Australians to realise their full potential and overcome challenges arising from their identity.

We leave you with some Pinnacle scholar and alumni reflections:

- Veronica's story: <https://youtu.be/b7NC4yH5hxM>
- *Pinnacle gave me a chosen family where my biological one had broken down and showed me the good in all this*
- *Before ... Pinnacle, I'd never met another LGBTIQ+ professional, but now I know there's a whole community of people who have not only gone before me, but who I know have my back and are keen to see me succeed*
- *I never would have been able to study or had the courage to even try without The Pinnacle Foundation*
- *The confidence in my identity that I've gained has helped me thrive within my academic program, take up competitive sport again, challenge stereotypes and develop skills in advocacy for the wider LGBTIQ+ community*
- *It has been a long journey for me to find my identity ... I was never really comfortable with my identity prior to being a Pinnacle scholar and I've learnt to embrace it and use it to help others*
- *The Pinnacle family, who believed in me and lifted me up in ways that I didn't think were possible or even deserved ... has done more for me than my biological family ever could have or knew how to do*
- *The support and guidance of the Pinnacle family has been life changing. I stand tall on the shoulders of those who have lifted me up*
- *It helped me gain more confidence and to be proud in who we are and that we should not be ashamed.*