

For immediate release**ABCN Foundation announces 35 new *Accelerate* scholarship awards to support youth held back by disadvantage**

The Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN) Foundation is proud to announce that 35 Australian students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds have won mentoring and financial scholarships this year. We received a record number of applications in 2020 – almost double those of last year and triple from regional areas – reflecting the deep need for our support in these communities. We are grateful that funder support has enabled us to increase our intake this year.

One of our successful applicants, Liam,¹ was placed in foster care as the victim of abuse when he was young. He has suffered from a range of mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Despite this, he is consistently in the top classes at school, volunteers as a peer mentor for younger year groups and is an active member of his local community sports club. He has experienced so much in his short life and his goal is to become a lawyer.

‘An ABCN scholarship will help me show the other students at my club and in my community that, even if they’ve had a rough start, they can still make something of themselves,’ he says.

Accelerate is a three-year mentoring and financial program for exceptional yet disadvantaged students. Successful applicants receive a unique combination of one-on-one corporate mentoring support and financial assistance over Years 11, 12 and their first year of tertiary studies or training.

Beneficiaries are Australian Year 10 students who demonstrate high potential but face significant disadvantage through socio-economic, cultural or other circumstances. Of our 2020 applications:

- > 48% were refugees
- > 31% have parents with an education level below Year 12
- > 23% had suffered traumatic experiences
- > 15% live in precarious housing.

Victorian students made up a greater proportion of applicants than in previous years, reflecting the particularly tough circumstances faced by Victorian families in lockdown due to COVID-19.

Students from low SES backgrounds are typically less likely to complete school and further education than those from more advantaged areas, which puts them at a greater risk of unemployment later in life. Only 68% of low SES students complete year 12 and only 25% are enrolled or have completed university by the age of 24.² ‘*Accelerate* aims to level the playing field for disadvantaged young people to help them prepare for the workforce and life after school,’ says ABCN Foundation Manager, Rachel Walker.

¹ Name has been changed to protect the identity of the student.

² *Educational opportunity in Australia 2020: Who succeeds and who misses out*, Victoria University’s Mitchell Institute.

Each year the ABCN Foundation offers a range of targeted scholarships to students who face amplified levels of disadvantage due to their socio-economic status, gender, geographical location or other circumstances. Some of these targeted scholarships are sponsored by member companies and donors. In 2020 these targeted scholarships included categories for First Nations, female, NESB/refugee, LGBTQI, Victorian and Western Australian students.

Successful recipients will be honoured at a national online event on 26 November.

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For more information about the scholarships and application process, please visit: <https://abcn.com.au/scholarship-foundation/>

For other information about the ABCN Foundation and the *Accelerate* program, please contact:

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About ABCN

ABCN was established in 2005 to improve the opportunities and outcomes for disadvantaged students from low socio-economic backgrounds. A network of 40+ member companies from corporate Australia and more than 200 partner schools, we deliver mentoring programs that encourage the completion of school and an awareness of post-school opportunities. Almost 50,000 students have benefited from ABCN's workplace-based mentoring programs since inception.

Our programs are delivered using a mix of digital and face-to-face formats. Our ability to successfully deliver programs digitally has been of critical importance during the COVID-19 pandemic and is allowing more students living in remote and rural areas to access our programs.

About the ABCN Foundation

The ABCN Foundation was established in 2013 as a separate entity to ABCN. Its sole focus is to award mentoring and financial scholarships to high-potential students whose disadvantage impacts their ability to complete school and pursue tertiary pathways. Since inception we have awarded 183 scholarships across Australia. The ABCN Foundation relies wholly on philanthropic support and donations. The following supporters have made our 2020 scholarships possible:

Corporate

Bank of Melbourne, Citi Pride Network, Investec, KPMG, Microsoft (Brian Glasgow Memorial Scholarship), Navitas, Optus, Stockland, TAL.

Trusts and Foundations

Fogarty Foundation, Harold Mitchell Foundation, James N Kirby Foundation, JIBB Family Foundation, Matana Foundation for Young People, Miss M K A Bell Memorial Fund, Oliver-Affleck Fund, Stan Perron Charitable Foundation, William Buckland Foundation.

Major Donors

Mike Hawker AM, Tony Macvean, Paul O'Sullivan, Rob Priestly, Matthew Quinn, Mary Reemst, Stephen Roberts, Robert Sindel, Guy Templeton, Carla Zampatti AC, Helen Zimmerman.