

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****BROTHER CONTINUES SISTER'S LEGACY AS PRAIRIEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT IS ANNOUNCED AS ONE OF THE 41 WINNERS OF ABCN ACCELERATE SCHOLARSHIPS**

27 October 2021

The Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN) Foundation has announced a record number of 41 Australian students will receive a life-changing mentoring and financial scholarship in 2022. The three-year *Accelerate* Scholarship program targets exceptional students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds who are facing significant economic, family, or social challenges.

This year, applications revealed a collective fear from young people about their future coupled with a 24% increase in those undergoing traumatic experiences. Every single application, without exception, shone out for the incredible hardships that our country's low SES student have gone through, and their impressive ability to overcome adversity.

Research shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from low SES backgrounds, and those living in remote areas are at least twice as likely to experience gaps in achievement during their education, which without support, can lead to large gaps as they age. The statistics indicate that those from the least affluent SES backgrounds are 25% less likely to complete year 12 than their more affluent peers, and equally less likely to successfully transition from school to further study or the workforce due to the opportunities available to them<sup>1</sup>. From 16 years of working with these students, ABCN knows those statistics do not reflect the capabilities and potential of these young people, and that is the organisation's focus.

ABCN Foundation Chair Mike Hawker AM said: 'This year's applications were one of our most diverse, with students whose families originated from countries all over the world wanting their chance to achieve their potential. The program exists because we want to break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage within Australia. It is talent-based, and we are finding exemplary examples of community engagement, leadership potential and academic capability from some extraordinary young people.'

In 2020, Prairiewood High School student Michele was awarded an ABCN Foundation three-year *Accelerate* Scholarship. In 2022, her younger brother Jacky will also receive an *Accelerate* Scholarship, continuing an impressive legacy for this Vietnamese family in Cabramatta.

As Vietnamese migrants who arrived in Australia as young adults, Jacky and Michele's parents had few employment options. Jacky describes his parents' incredible commitment to his and his sister's education despite all the setbacks they have faced in the past two years:

'My father's unemployment places immense pressure on my mother to provide for the family. Although she qualified to be a nurse at the start of 2020, the onset of COVID prevented her starting her new career because of the real possibility of her passing it on to my invalid father. Throughout their struggle however, my parents have always prioritised our education because they have faith in us to be their future.'

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<sup>1</sup> Lamb, S., Huo, S., Walstab, A., Wade, A., Maire, Q., Doecke, E., Jackson, J. & Endekov, Z. (2020). Educational opportunity in Australia 2020: Who succeeds and who misses out. Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University, for the Mitchell Institute: Melbourne.

'Not being one to think small, I aspire to study to become an architect when I finish school despite the somewhat overwhelming challenges presented by my significant socio-economic disadvantage. My confidence in being able to turn my dream into reality comes from my determination to succeed in gaining excellent academic results, and my willingness to deny my financial and social/cultural limitations by participating in extracurricular activities and external programs such as those of ABCN.'

Prairiewood High School Principal Belinda Giudice says: 'Jacky's ability to take affirmative steps to overcome his disadvantage is admirable. He is not content for others to "drive his ship" and is determined to take every opportunity offered to him to learn how to "steer his own boat". He is comfortably confident that his natural ability, supported by his drive and determination to succeed, will help him to realise the benefits that his public education will deliver.

'Jacky demonstrates an uncommon understanding of and insight into the disadvantages and career-limiting influences a background such as his can have on realising career aspirations ... This scholarship will perfectly suit this young man who is ready to fly!'

Of the 2021 applications:

- 70% are female
- 59% suffered a traumatic experience
- 50% are non-English speaking background
- 19% are Rural, Remote or Regional
- 19% live in precarious housing
- 17% are refugees
- 8% are First Nations young people

An additional 25 students who narrowly missed out on scholarships will for the first time this year receive a Highly Commended Award which includes a mentoring session on financial capability and a \$500 financial award.

### ENDS

For more information about the scholarships, 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 the ABCN Foundation

The ABCN Foundation was established in 2013 as a separate entity to ABCN, a national network of more than 40 member companies and 200 partner schools that, together, deliver mentoring programs to students in low SES communities. The Foundation's 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. Our scholarship program, *Accelerate*, provides corporate mentoring and financial relief to scholars for three years, over Years 11, 12 and the first year of tertiary education, employment, or training. Collaboration with ABCN's network allows us to connect with the students who need our help the most and provide them with access to corporate mentors and opportunities. The ABCN Foundation relies wholly on philanthropic support and donations.