

Evaluation of the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour

Aurora Education Foundation

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Glossary

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|--------------------------|--|
| Aurora | Aurora Education Foundation |
| Berkeley | University of California, Berkeley |
| Cambridge | University of Cambridge |
| Columbia | Columbia University |
| FCO | Foreign and Commonwealth Office |
| Harvard | Harvard University |
| NYU | New York University |
| Oxford | University of Oxford |
| Stanford | Stanford University |
| TAI | The Aspiration Initiative |
| The Study Tour | The Indigenous Scholars International Study Tour |
| The Scholarships Program | The International Scholarships Program |
| The Website | The Indigenous Scholarships Website |

In this document the term 'Indigenous' refers to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

1 Executive Summary

Since 2010 the Aurora Education Foundation (Aurora) has supported high achieving Indigenous students to achieve academic excellence at some of the most prestigious universities in the world. Through the International Scholarships Program (Scholarships Program) and the Indigenous Scholars International Study Tour (Study Tour) Aurora has opened pathways to international academic excellence for Indigenous students. The success of both programs has resulted in significant outcomes for Indigenous students:

- The Scholarships Program has enabled over 60 trail blazing Scholars to study at leading international universities and achieve numerous firsts for Indigenous students, including the first Indigenous students to graduate from the University of Cambridge (Cambridge) and the University of Oxford (Oxford).
- The 100 per cent retention and graduation rate of Scholars has resulted in a growing cohort of high achieving graduates who are producing the highest quality learning and research and have begun to take on influential positions in Australian society.
- The Study Tour has supported over 100 Indigenous students to make informed decisions about their academic future. This has included 27 participants who have subsequently studied overseas.

Stakeholders highlighted the combination of financial, practical and social supports typical of both programs were central to the achievement of the program outcomes. Many Scholars reported without the Scholarships Program overseas study would not have been possible, while many Study Tour participants reported the Study Tour made them better informed and energised to undertake opportunities for further study both overseas and in Australia.

The Study Tour and Scholarships Program are supporting Indigenous students widen their view of what's possible and to achieve their aspirations. The programs foster a cohort of Indigenous students who represent the highest levels of academic success and have the potential to contribute to a growing Indigenous group who take on positions of influence, impact on Australian society and re-set what we understand is possible for gifted Indigenous students.

Evaluation findings

Prior to the establishment of the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour, no Indigenous Australian had ever studied at Oxford or Cambridge. Few had done so at other leading universities in the UK and the US. This was due to multiple barriers that high achieving Indigenous students face to attending leading international universities. These include:

- limited coverage of available scholarships and inflexibility in their selection criteria
- limited awareness among Indigenous students of available scholarships and how to apply for them
- lower educational aspiration among Indigenous students due to a deficit paradigm that reduces their confidence in their ability to succeed at leading international universities.

Aurora established the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour to address these challenges in an effort to increase the number of Indigenous students studying at leading international universities. In 2010, Aurora partnered with the Charlie Perkins Trust and the Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation to develop and deliver the Scholarships Program. The goal of the Scholarships Program is to support Indigenous students to undertake postgraduate study and short executive courses. Aurora established

the Study Tour soon after to help to identify potential applicants for the Scholarships Program, and to help students consider wider university study options and realise that international study is achievable.

Aurora designed the two programs to complement one another. International Scholars demonstrate to Study Tour participants that international study is achievable, and the Study Tour provides a pipeline of students to apply for Scholarships. Together, the programs provide a spectrum of opportunities for students to explore, apply to and succeed at leading international universities.

Both programs are unique in their focus supporting Indigenous students from a broad range of fields of study to undertake graduate programs at leading international universities. This leaves them uniquely positioned to support large numbers of Indigenous students to access prestigious universities of exceptional quality, international networks of alumni and academics, and subsequent academic and professional opportunities.

The appropriateness of the program's design is apparent in the outcomes of the programs. These outcomes are evident in the data on educational and employment outcomes and in broader qualitative data. The data collectively indicate Aurora has increased the number of Indigenous students who are successfully studying at leading international universities. It also indicates Aurora has helped Indigenous students to make informed decisions about their academic future while motivating them to aspire to academic excellence.

The Scholarships Program's impact is evident in the academic and employment outcomes of Scholars

Aurora's successful management of the Scholarship's Program has resulted in a growing cohort of Indigenous students who are in many cases the first Indigenous Australians to have undertaken or completed a degree at their respective institutions. As mentioned above, the Scholarships Program's impact is evident in the 100 per cent retention and graduation rate of the Scholars. The Scholars' success has gone beyond these leading institutions with all of the program's graduates going on to further study or influential positions in academia, government or other fields.

The Scholarships Program facilitates Scholar's success through financial, academic and social support

Stakeholders recognised the core components of the Scholarships Program had contributed to the Scholars' success (as discussed in section 5). These included:

- Vital financial support which opened up opportunities for Scholars that would not have otherwise been available and aided their success.
- A strong network of scholars and Aurora staff that provided pastoral and academic support and motivated Scholars to succeed.
- Academic experiences that built the Scholars' confidence and connected them to leading academics in their field.
- The prestige associated with graduating from one of the world's leading universities opening up academic and employment opportunities that many scholars believe would not have been possible if they had studied in Australia.

The Study Tour has supported Indigenous students to explore opportunities to study at leading international universities and to realise they are achievable

The impact of the Study Tour is most evident in the pathways of the 27 participants who have subsequently studied overseas on Charlie Perkins, Roberta Sykes or other scholarships. The broader impact of the program is evident in the pathways of the other participants. Many have returned from

the Study Tour resolved and confident to pursue study overseas in the future, if not immediately. Others have decided to pursue study or employment in Australia. In either case the Study Tour has helped participants to make better-informed decisions about their pathways and made them feel more confident, informed and excited about study and career opportunities they have pursued either overseas or in Australia.

The Study Tour's combination of activities encouraged participants to pursue postgraduate study

Stakeholders attributed the success of the Study Tour to the opportunities it provides for participants to interact – and “hold their own” – with academics and students at leading international universities, experience first-hand what makes each university different, and be part of a network of high-achieving Indigenous students. These opportunities were enabled by the extensive preparation Aurora undertakes each year to promote the Tour, select participants and prepare them to make the most of it.

Scholarships and Study Tour program update

Nous Group (Nous) completed the evaluation report in May 2017 and the numbers outlined in the evaluation findings represent a snapshot in time. Since May 2017 the number of scholarship students, scholarship graduates and study tour participants has increased. We have outlined updated numbers as of February 2018 below:

- 43 Indigenous students have received Scholarships
 - 18 Charlie Perkins Scholars, 24 Roberta Sykes Scholars and 1 scholar who received both
 - In 2017/18 there were 8 new scholars accepted to programs, including 2 MBA and 2 PhD students, across Cambridge, Oxford, Harvard, UCLA and London School of Economics.
- 31 Scholars have graduated from overseas universities
 - Three Scholars graduated from their degrees in 2017; they have each started careers, one as a lecturer in Public Health, one as a researcher in Indigenous Public Policy and the other is employed by a State Education Department.
- 118 Indigenous students have participated in the Study Tour
 - 19 students participated in the 2017 Study Tour; 2 participants applied and were accepted to universities that they visited on the Tour; a further 2 have applied and are waiting on confirmation of their acceptance. A further group of participants have indicated they will apply for overseas study when they complete their current studies.

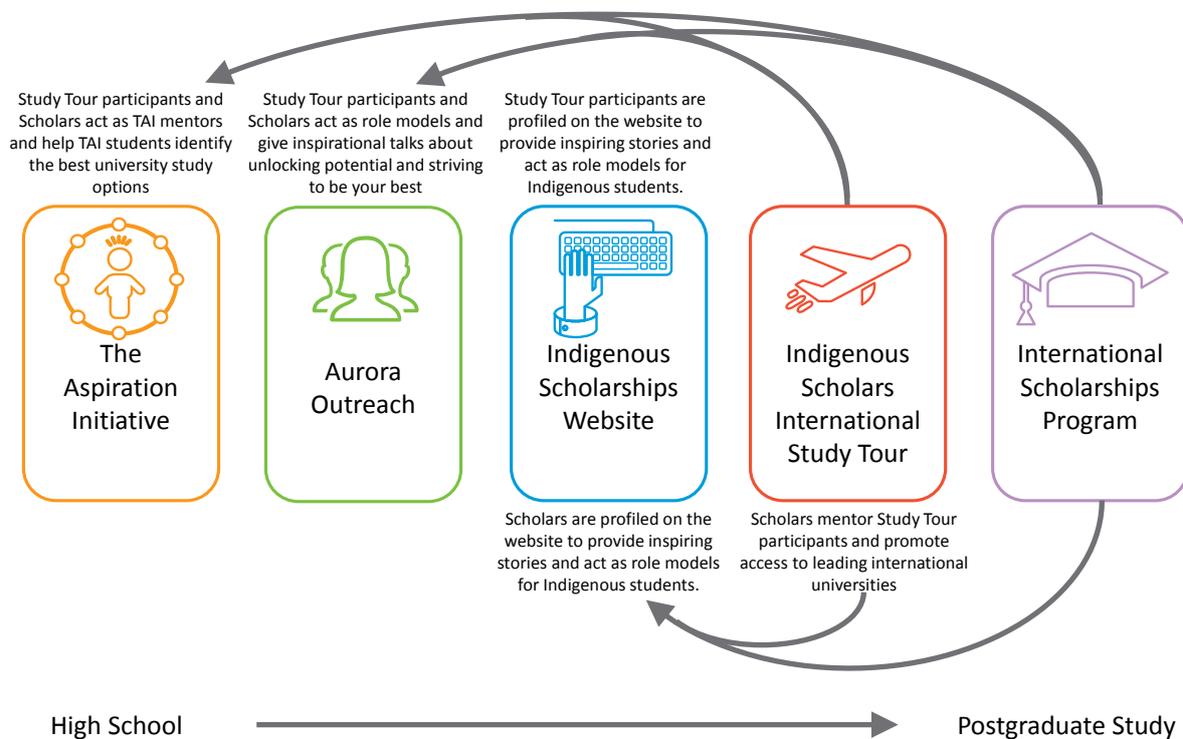
Aurora has also implemented a number of improvements to the Study Tour since the report was completed. These include:

- Improved communication processes for Study Tour applicants during the enquiry and interview stage, in particular with regard to funding.
- Formalisation of the Cultural Liaison Officer (CLO) role into paid role descriptions to outline expectations and reporting guidelines.
- Adjustments to the interview process so that CLOs were not included and did not face perceived conflicts of interest during the Study Tour.

2 This report assesses the impact of the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour

The purpose of this evaluation is to demonstrate the need for, impact and opportunities to improve the suite of Indigenous education programs Aurora delivers. A key feature of the suite of programs is the formal and informal interactions between participants within and across programs. Many participants access, or are involved in, more than one program. This in itself creates a positive peer environment. This is reflected in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: The collective suite of Aurora’s Indigenous education programs from high school through to postgraduate study



The first stage of the evaluation provided a baseline of performance and offered preliminary findings for each program (except for Aurora Outreach, which was not in operation when the evaluation began).

This report focuses on the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour. It analyses further data collected about the programs and offers more detailed findings. This report is being produced at a point in time at which the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour have been running for over five years and have had an opportunity to mature. The timing of this report provides an opportunity to reassess the need for the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour, assess evidence of their impact, and identify adjustments that Aurora can make to improve the programs.

2.1 This report provides an overview of the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour including formative and summative findings

This report evaluates the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour, and includes:

- the backgrounds and contexts for the programs
- the understood needs for the programs
- how the program models were designed to meet those needs
- how Aurora delivered the programs and the flexibility of delivery during the transition of participants from the Study Tour into postgraduate overseas study.

The evaluation assesses the strengths of the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour that have contributed to their outcomes and explores potential areas of improvement to enhance their impact in the future. In doing so, it considers how best to design future iterations of the programs to further enhance effectiveness and impact on participants and the broader education system.

The main data sources used in this report include:

- interviews with past and current participants of the programs and Aurora staff members
- surveys of past and current participants
- datasets publicly available from the Commonwealth government and other sources
- existing literature
- program documentation.

To maintain the privacy of interviewees and survey respondents, they are cited in general terms throughout the report with reference to their relationship to the Scholarships Program or the Study Tour (e.g. participant or staff-member).

Information that could potentially identify Scholars or Study Tour participants has been included in a small number of figures, but only with permission.

This report is a part of a broader evaluation of the suite of Indigenous Education programs that Aurora delivers. A report submitted in early 2016 provided preliminary findings about the programs individually and collectively and established a baseline for the evaluation. This report builds on the first report but focuses specifically on the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour.

3 The programs were designed to help Indigenous students excel

Thousands of Australians study in the UK and the US each year, and are one of the largest groups of international students at Oxford, Cambridge and other universities.¹ Yet prior to the establishment of the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour, no Indigenous Australian had ever studied for a full-time degree at Oxford or Cambridge. Few had done so at other leading universities in the UK and the US.

High achieving Indigenous students face multiple barriers to attending leading international universities. The Scholarships Program and the Study Tour were established to address these barriers and provide a pathway for Indigenous students to succeed at leading international universities.

3.1 Indigenous students face multiple barriers to attending leading international universities

A number of factors contributed to the low representation of Indigenous students studying at leading international universities. One was the poor education outcomes of Indigenous students in high school and undergraduate study, which reduces the number with the academic results required to gain entry.²

However, even for Indigenous students with strong records of educational achievement, a number of other factors acted as significant barriers to international study. These included:

- **Lower educational aspirations** – A review of the literature suggests Indigenous university students are less likely to hold a clear aspiration for educational achievement compared to their non-Indigenous peers. Factors discouraging Indigenous students include doubt in their own abilities, feelings of isolation within both their universities and communities, and a perception that their non-Indigenous peers assume they have enrolled in university through equity scholarships and alternative entry schemes.³ This is related to a deficit-thinking paradigm that assumes Indigenous people are not academically interested by nature. This can affect not only how they are taught but also the options presented to them.⁴
- **Limited awareness of available opportunities** – There was limited information about available scholarships, how to apply for them and how to navigate different scholarship administrators' processes.⁵ These processes were particularly difficult to navigate for Indigenous students

¹ See for example University of Oxford, *Facts and figures*, <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/full-version-facts-and-figures?wssl=1>; University of Cambridge, *International student data*, <https://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/applying/global-community/international-student-data>; Harvard University, *Global alumni: top countries*, <http://worldwide.harvard.edu/harvards-global-alumni-top-countries>; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, *International student mobility in tertiary education: Inbound students*, <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>.

² See for example Nous Group, *Evaluation of The Aspiration Initiative*, 2017; Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators*, 2016; Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth, *Cohort Reports*.

³ E Penchenkina and I Anderson, *Background paper on Indigenous Australian Higher Education: Trends, Initiatives and Policy Implications*, 2011, p. 12, https://sydney.edu.au/documents/about/higher_education/2011/20110930%20IndigenousHigherEducationReview-ResearchPaper.pdf.

⁴ L Behrendt, S Larkin, R Griew and P Kelly, *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report*, 2012, p. 21.

⁵ L Behrendt, S Larkin, R Griew and P Kelly, *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report*, 2012, p. 64; E Pechenkina and I Anderson, *Background paper on Indigenous Australian Higher Education: Trends, Initiatives and Policy Implications*, 2011, p. 5.

because of limited numbers of Indigenous students who had navigated them before, limiting the number of people able to provide advice and assistance.

- **A lack of appropriate scholarships** – Available scholarships were limited in their coverage and inflexible in their eligibility criteria (see Section 3.3).

3.2 The programs were established to increase the number of Indigenous students studying at leading international universities

Aurora established the Scholarships Program in 2010 to assist Indigenous students to undertake postgraduate study and short executive courses at leading international universities. The Study Tour was established in 2011 to help to identify potential applicants for the Scholarships Program, help students consider wider university study options and realise that international study is achievable.

The Scholarships Program was established to support Indigenous students to study at leading international universities

In 2008, Aurora conducted research that identified that no Indigenous Australian had studied at Oxford or Cambridge (as discussed in Section 3.1). Leading figures in the Indigenous affairs sector encouraged Aurora to get involved to help to address the issue.

Later that year Aurora was given responsibility to deliver Indigenous scholarships available through:

- **The Charlie Perkins Trust**, which was established in 2010 to provide scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge for Indigenous students.
- **The Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation**, which was established in 1990 (as the Black Women's Action in Education Foundation) to support Indigenous students to study in Australia and overseas.

Aurora's objective in administering the scholarships available through the Charlie Perkins Trust and Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation was to maximise their value and impact. To this effect Aurora recognised the need to:

- identify and assist a cohort of Indigenous students to be accepted into leading international universities
- provide culturally competent supports that would address the specific needs of Indigenous students.

These activities became the basis of the Scholarships Program that Aurora has delivered since 2010.⁶

Aurora's goals in delivering the Scholarships Program are as follows:

- increase Scholars' knowledge and uptake of opportunities to undertake postgraduate study and shorter professional courses at leading overseas universities
- enable them to access and maintain networks of academically and professionally minded peers
- create a community of scholars in which they can learn and perform at the highest levels.

⁶ This information was drawn from interviews conducted with Aurora staff in 2016 and 2017.

At a broader level the goal of the Scholarships Program is to increase the number of Indigenous people in positions of influence in society.

The Study Tour was established to identify potential applicants for the Scholarships Program and assist them to realise international study is achievable.

Aurora successfully supported two Indigenous students through the Charlie Perkins Scholarship in 2010 and three students through Roberta Sykes Scholarships in 2011. The inconsistent take up of the available scholarships led Aurora to consider how it could address the limited awareness of available opportunities among high achieving Indigenous students and spur increased demand for the Scholarships Program.

At the same time, a philanthropist expressed a desire to support two Indigenous students who had applied to study in the UK to travel there to learn more about their prospective courses and universities. Aurora encouraged the philanthropist to support not only Indigenous students who had applied, but also those who could apply. Aurora sought expressions of interest and received over 30 responses from potential participants, many of whom had outstanding academic records. This was the impetus for the first Study Tour. Since then the Study Tour has expanded to include multiple universities in both the UK and the US.⁷

The Study Tour shares the goals of the Scholarships Program. Additional goals of the Study Tour are to help participants understand that postgraduate study at leading overseas universities is achievable, meet and build connections with university academics, become part of a cohort of academically successful Indigenous students and make the right choices about postgraduate study.

3.3 The programs are unique because of their focus

The Scholarships Program and the Study Tour are uniquely positioned to increase the number of Indigenous students studying at leading international universities. In 2016, Boston Consulting Group conducted an environmental scan of Indigenous education programs. This revealed that Aurora's Scholarships Program is the only program that focuses specifically on Indigenous students and supports those from a broad range of fields of study to complete postgraduate study at leading international universities.

A number of programs exist to improve access to educational opportunities for Indigenous students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. However, all other postgraduate Scholarships Programs either:

- accept applications from all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous
- support Indigenous students in one particular field of study
- support Indigenous students to undertake a brief period of research overseas toward an Australian degree
- support Indigenous students to complete postgraduate study at an Australian university or an overseas university that is not one of the leading international universities.

Only four other postgraduate scholarships programs focus specifically on Indigenous students and support them to study overseas. Of these, one focuses on midwifery, one on the "cultural, creative and heritage sectors", and one on health sciences at a particular university in New Zealand. The other

⁷ Staff interviews, 2016-17.

supports students to undertake four to six months of research overseas toward an Australian postgraduate degree.

This highlights that the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour are uniquely positioned to support large numbers of Indigenous students to access prestigious universities of exceptional quality, international networks of alumni and academics, and subsequent professional and academic opportunities.

4 The programs have provided opportunities for Indigenous students to explore, apply to and achieve at leading international universities

The Scholarships Program has awarded 69 scholarships, fellowships and bursaries for Indigenous students to attend leading international universities since 2010, while the Study Tour has supported over 100 students to explore opportunities to do so since 2011. The program participants are high academic achievers with diverse academic backgrounds and personal circumstances.

This section provides an overview of how Aurora has delivered the programs. It describes the students who have participated, the support they have received, and the Aurora staff, academics and mentors who have delivered it.

4.1 The Scholarships Program has awarded 69 scholarships, fellowships and bursaries

The Scholarships Program has awarded 69 scholarships, fellowships and bursaries for Indigenous students to attend leading international universities (see Appendix 1 for list). In many cases, the financial and practical support the scholarships provided has enabled opportunities that would not have otherwise been possible.

Scholars are diverse in their educational backgrounds, interests and personal circumstances

Scholars range in age from those in their 20s to their 50s. Some have had families and, where possible, their families have accompanied them overseas for the duration of their study.⁸ The diversity of this cohort reflects Aurora's efforts to spread awareness of the opportunities available to all Indigenous students who have the potential to be successful studying at leading international universities.

The scholars have diverse educational backgrounds. Of the scholars who responded to a survey:

- 65 per cent did not have a parent or carer who completed university⁹
- 74 per cent attended public schools for all or part of high school, while only one student received a scholarship to attend a private school¹⁰
- 57 per cent attended high school in rural or regional areas¹¹
- 26 per cent indicated Year 10 was their highest level of achievement at high school¹²

⁸ This information was drawn from a survey of past and current Study Tour participants and Scholars conducted in 2016 and 2017, which had 84 responses, 23 of which were from scholars.

⁹ Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

¹⁰ Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17. Of the 23 Scholars who responded to this survey, 52 per cent attended non-selective public schools for all of high school, nine per cent attended non-selective public schools for part of high school, and 13 per cent attended selective public schools for all of high school. 22 per cent did not attend public schools and four per cent did not respond.

¹¹ Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17. Of the 23 Scholars who responded to this survey, 57 per cent attended high school in rural or regional areas, 39 per cent attended high school in metropolitan areas and 4 per cent did not respond.

¹² Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

- 47 per cent had received an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) of 90 or more (including one Scholar who left high school before Year 10), 31 percent received an ATAR of less than 75, and 11 percent (two respondents) did not receive an ATAR.¹³

The Scholars also have diverse educational interests which are reflected in the range of academic fields they represent - law, health, education, engineering, humanities, social sciences and creative arts.¹⁴

While all of the scholars are high achieving students, a significant proportion have overcome challenges in their personal circumstances to achieve their success. Thirty per cent of scholars seriously considered leaving university at some point during their studies due to early failures, financial difficulties, family responsibilities, or feelings of inadequacy.¹⁵

Aurora undertakes a broad range of activities to facilitate the Program's success

Aurora undertakes activities across the full life cycle of a scholarship from the initial application through to the completion of the Scholars' studies. These include administrative activities and activities Aurora delivers to support Scholars to achieve academic success.

Aurora does not conduct the interviews themselves – the Charlie Perkins Trust and Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation undertake separate interview processes for their respective scholarships.

In relation to Cambridge and Oxford, if Scholars are successful with their scholarship applications Aurora supports them to travel to the UK in April/ May to choose their colleges, which is where they will live for the duration of their degree.¹⁶ Different Colleges offer different forms of accommodation and attract different demographics (e.g. families versus young single students), and it is important that Scholars identify the right environment to suit their particular learning needs.

Aurora administers the scholarship disbursements for each Scholar and then tracks their progress and supports them throughout their studies. This is partly the role of the Aurora Fellow and the Board of Trustees, who are based in the UK (see below). Beyond this, the nature of the support Aurora provides varies according to Scholar's needs. Examples of support Aurora has provided in the past include academic mentoring, access to counselling, and funding for a Scholar to return temporarily to Australia at short notice following a family illness.¹⁷

The Scholarships Program forms a supportive network

A team of Aurora staff, university academics and Scholars themselves across Australia, the UK and the US have driven the success of the program. The contributions made to the Scholarships Program include the following:

- **Aurora's CEO leads the continual evolution and success of the Scholarships Program.** The CEO plays an important role across all of the major activities of the Scholarships Program. His broad involvement has been crucial to the development of the program. Across the program the CEO: manages Aurora's relationship with the Charlie Perkins Trust and Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation; holds fundraising activities; fosters and maintains the relationships with partner universities and colleges; participates in the application process; and maintains a close

¹³ Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

¹⁴ Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

¹⁵ Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

¹⁶ This will include Charlie Perkins Scholars and any Roberta Sykes Scholars who attend Oxford or Cambridge universities.

¹⁷ Aurora, program documentation; Staff interviews, 2016-17.

connection with each Scholar. Many Scholars see the CEO as the first point of call for support and guidance.

- **The International Scholarships Coordinator and Support Officer provide administrative assistance to the scholars.** Aurora staff-members assist Scholars from the application stage through to graduation. Aurora adopts a holistic approach, helping Scholars to compile materials for their applications, prepare for interviews, meet their reporting requirements, address any issues or concerns and deal with any challenges that arise.
- **The Aurora Fellow and Board of Trustees provide pastoral care for the Scholars and ensure on-the-ground support.** The Aurora Fellow is a Fellow at Cambridge while the Board of Trustees comprises academics from Cambridge and Oxford. These individuals provide pastoral care for the Scholars in the UK which has included guidance on navigating the university systems at Cambridge and Oxford and organising tutoring. The Aurora Fellow and Board of Trustees also provide advice to Aurora about Scholars' progress and needs. This ensures the Scholars receive support for their successful transition to Cambridge and Oxford that meets their educational and personal needs.
- **The Scholars who are overseas support and motivate one another.** Aurora has made a deliberate choice to foster a supportive cohort of students who are able to provide cultural and pastoral support and motivate one another while studying overseas. The inter-Scholar support is an important complement to the administrative and pastoral care provided by Aurora staff (as is discussed in further detail in Section 5).

Other Aurora staff-members have supported these roles throughout the program, including staff-members from other Aurora programs and the Director of Education / Chief Operating Officer.

These arrangements have remained relatively consistent over the life of the Scholarships Program. Changes made to the approach have included the development of a staff handbook, which strengthened the processes and procedures for the Scholarships Program, and the addition of a funding manager.¹⁸

Government, corporate and philanthropic sources have funded the Scholarships Program

Aurora receives funding for the Scholarships Program from the Australian and British Governments, as well as various universities, companies, philanthropies and individual donors. Government funding has primarily been invested in the scholarships themselves, while other funding has contributed to the broader support Scholars have received. Aurora is focussing on increasing funding from corporates, who currently represent a small portion of total funding.¹⁹

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) of the British Government provides scholarships in all Commonwealth countries and many others world-wide. Australia is the only country in which the FCO allocates all of its scholarship funding to externally administered scholarships. The FCO made this decision in large part because the unique nature of the Scholarships Program and the significant need it addresses created potential for greater impact than if they offered their own scholarships.²⁰ In 2016, the FCO won the Public Affairs Asia Gold Standard Award for Diplomatic Engagement on the basis of their partnership with the Scholarships Program.

¹⁸ Aurora, program documentation; Staff interviews, 2016-17.

¹⁹ Aurora, program documentation; Staff interviews, 2016-17.

²⁰ This information was drawn from interviews conducted with university and government stakeholders in 2017.

4.2 The Study Tour has enabled over 100 students to explore opportunities for international study

The Study Tour has enabled over 100 students to explore opportunities to study at leading international universities and realise these opportunities are achievable. Like the Scholars, Study Tour participants have been high academic performers but do not represent a single cohort in terms of background.

Aurora has provided intensive support before, during and after the Study Tours through a team of Aurora staff-members, Indigenous mentors and current Scholars. Funding from government and philanthropic sources as well as Study Tour participants' own networks has enabled Aurora to run the Study Tour.

The Study Tour has assisted high achieving participants with diverse backgrounds and interests

103 Indigenous students have participated in Study Tours since 2011. Participants are selected based on their ability to explain why study at an international university will enhance their learning experience or results and demonstrate their potential to be accepted. Since its inception 45 per cent of applicants have successfully been accepted onto Study Tours. Candidates receive assistance from Aurora to prepare applications and applicants without sufficiently strong academic records are encouraged to re-apply after undertaking further study and improving their results.²¹

The demographic diversity of Study Tour participants is similar to that of Scholars described in section 4.1. This partly reflects the large number of Study Tour participants who have gone on to be Scholars. Among those who responded to a survey²²:

- 25 per cent left high school after completing Year 10 (and one per cent after completing Year 9)
- 36 per cent seriously considered leaving university at some point during their studies.

They ranged in age from their 20s to their 50s and in some cases had to balance their commitments on the Study Tour with family responsibilities.²³

Study Tour participants have been similar in their backgrounds to Scholarship Program participants too. Among those who responded to the survey:

- 67 per cent did not have a parent or carer who completed university
- 72 per cent attended public schools for all or part of high school
- 71 per cent attended schools in rural or regional areas for all or part of high school
- 42 per cent received an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) of 90 or more, 21 percent received an ATAR of less than 75, and 15 percent did not receive an ATAR.²⁴

All in all this highlights that, while all Scholars and Study Tour participants are high academic performers and they share some points of commonality, they do not have a common background. Aurora has enabled a diverse range of students to explore and access opportunities for international study.

²¹ Aurora, program documentation.

²² This information was drawn from a survey of past and current Study Tour participants and Scholars conducted in 2016 and 2017, which had 84 responses, 78 of which were from respondents who had participated or were currently on a study tour at the time of their response.

²³ Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

²⁴ Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

The support Aurora provides spans the Study Tour itself and several months before and after

Aurora limited the first Study Tour, in 2011, to Cambridge and Oxford. Since then Aurora has expanded the Study Tour to encompass visits to seven leading international universities in the UK and the US over a six week period. The five additional universities included on the Study Tour include Harvard University (Harvard), Stanford University (Stanford), Columbia University (Columbia), New York University (NYU), and the University of California, Berkeley (Berkeley) and the London School of Economics (LSE).

This is an extensive logistical operation, with the entire process spanning several months before and after the Study Tour:

- **Before the Study Tour**, Aurora advertises the Tour, interviews applicants, and selects participants. It then prepares them through the provision of a detailed handbook about the Tour, Sydney-based workshops, and opportunities for Skype calls with Scholars currently studying overseas on Charlie Perkins and Roberta Sykes Scholarships. Throughout this period, Aurora works with universities overseas to plan the visits, develops itineraries for the trip, and books flights and accommodation.
- **During the Study Tour**, Aurora assists participants to organise meetings with university staff and holds networking events. It also holds regular debriefs with participants and collects reflections and other materials for inclusion in reports to donors. During campus visits, students organise and attend approximately two to three meetings with university faculty members each day. Meetings range from university administrators to leading academics within their respective fields. Participants also have the opportunity to meet with current students to hear about their perspectives and experiences as students at the universities.
- **After the Study Tour**, Aurora reports back to funders about the Study Tour (partly through an evaluation report). Participants themselves assist with this process by sending their reflections on the Study Tour and what it meant to them to the people and institutions that funded their attendance.

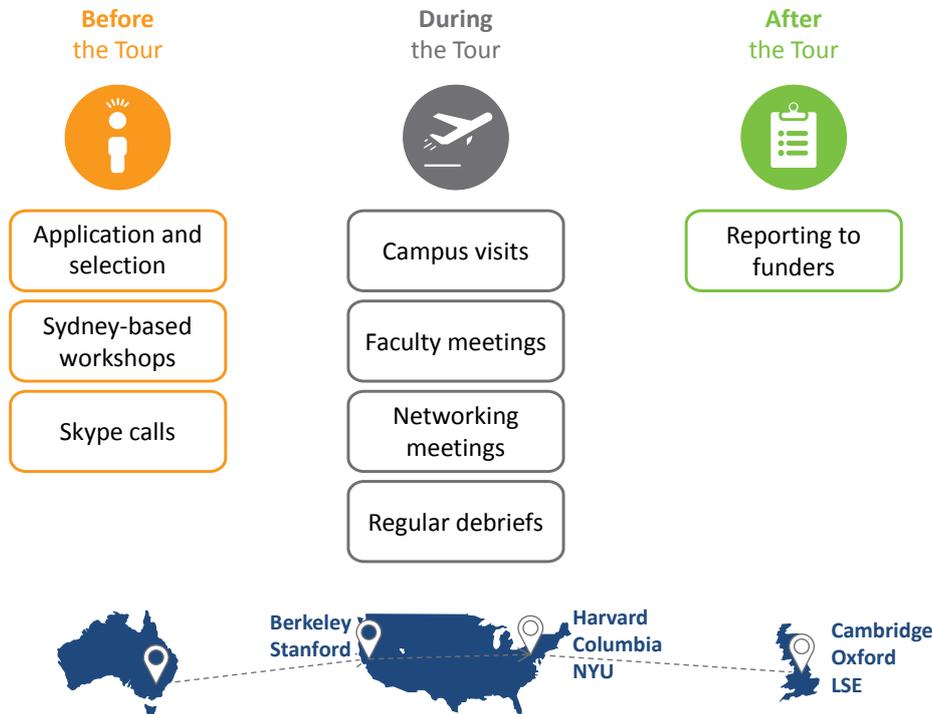
An overview of the support Aurora provides to Study Tour participants is provided in Figure 2 below.²⁵

Aurora has continued to improve the Study Tour each year. In addition to the inclusion of new universities, Aurora has expanded the Sydney-based workshops to two days, which has helped to better prepare participants for the demands of the Study Tour. Aurora has also given participants the choice to only attend one leg of the Study Tour (the UK or the US), which has reduced the disruption to these participants' prior commitments and the cost to Aurora.²⁶

²⁵ Aurora, program documentation; Staff interviews, 2016-17.

²⁶ Staff interviews, 2016-17.

Figure 2: Study Tour activities



Aurora staff, Indigenous mentors and current Scholars help provide an empowering and culturally safe experience

A team of Aurora staff and Indigenous mentors, as well as current Scholars, have helped to ensure the Study Tour is an empowering and culturally safe experience:

- Aurora’s CEO and staff manage and participate in the Study Tour.** Aurora’s CEO actively manages and participates in all stages of the Study Tour, from interviewing and selecting Study Tour participants, to preparing them for departure and accompanying them to the UK and the US, to advising them on their university and scholarship applications upon their return.

This is in addition to the CEO’s broader role of securing funding for the Study Tour and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders at universities in the US and the UK. As with the Scholarships Program, the International Scholarships Coordinator and the International Scholarships Support Officer support the CEO. They are responsible for the administrative and logistical aspects of the Study Tour (along with another part-time staff-member). One of these staff-members also attends the Study Tour.
- Indigenous cultural liaison officers (CLOs) provide practical, cultural and emotional support during the Study Tour.** Two Indigenous CLOs (past Study Tour participants and/or Scholars) attend the Study Tour. Their role is to advise participants on how to get the most out of their visits to universities, ensure the Study Tour is culturally safe, and provide emotional support. (Aurora first created this role for the 2014 Study Tour.)
- Current Scholars provide insights into international study and demonstrate it is achievable.** Current Scholars, many of whom attended a previous Study Tour, participate in Skype calls with participants before they depart and meet with them while they are in the UK and the US. They provide first-hand insights into the Study Tour, university and scholarship applications, and international study. They also demonstrate in a very real way what participants’ can achieve.

Other Aurora staff-members have supported these core roles since the establishment of the Study Tour, in some cases attending the Study Tour as well.²⁷

Along with the changes to the Study Tour activities (discussed above), Aurora has continually made changes to improve its arrangements for the team that delivers the Study Tour. These have included:

- the formalisation of the CLO role, through requirements that CLOs be past Study Tour participants and that one male and one female CLO attend each Study Tour
- the addition of a formal interview and a professional development process for CLOs
- the attendance of a second Aurora staff-member on the Study Tour, with each Aurora staff-member attending one leg to avoid staff-burnout.

The Study Tour draws on funding from government and philanthropic sources as well as participants' own networks

Aurora aims to collect half the cost of each individual's participation in the Study Tour from their Australian university or employer. Additional funding is sourced from the federal government and philanthropies. Aurora has recently designed a new funding model for the Study Tour, under which they enter into memorandums of understanding with universities to send a certain number of their students on the Study Tour each year.²⁸

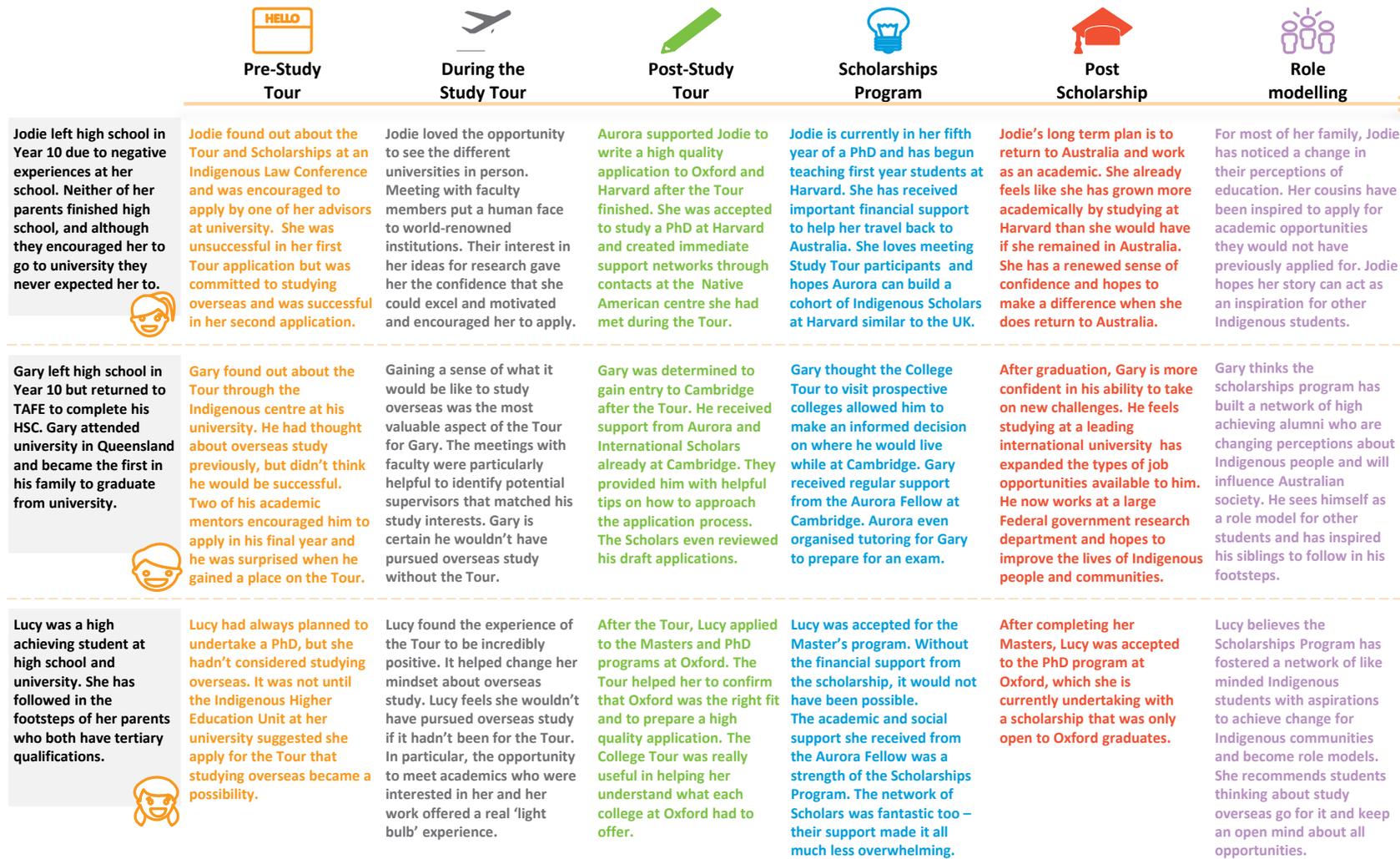
4.3 Together the programs have provided a spectrum of opportunities for Indigenous students

Together, the Scholarships Program and the Study Tour provide a spectrum of opportunities for students to explore, apply to and achieve at leading international universities. Figure 3 describes the journeys of three students who have participated in both programs, including the activities they participated in and the support they received, with a focus on the features of the programs that they highlighted as critical to their success.

²⁷ Aurora, program documentation; Staff interviews, 2016-17.

²⁸ Aurora, program documentation; Staff interviews, 2016-17.

Figure 3: Journeys of Study Tour participants and Scholars²⁹



²⁹ Scholar interviews, 2016-17; Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

5 The Scholarships Program has facilitated Indigenous students' success at leading international universities and beyond

The Scholarship Program has been exceptionally successful. Scholars identified that the financial support they received removed barriers to international study, while Aurora staff and other scholars provided support and motivation that helped them to succeed. Studying at leading international universities in turn built their confidence, connected them to leading academics in their fields, and created academic and employment opportunities.

The success of the Scholarships Program has led to it being a model for other scholarship programs for students from disadvantaged groups. One university stakeholder reported individuals involved with other scholarship programs had sought advice from Aurora's CEO - about challenges they might encounter and how to address them, for example.³⁰ This highlights the potential impact of the Scholarships Program for other groups who have encountered barriers to leading international universities similar to those that Indigenous Australians face.

5.1 The Scholarship Program's impact is evident in the academic and employment outcomes of Scholars

"I set my goal to come out overall with a distinction. They don't readily give them out; in fact often they will only give two a year. This year myself and one other student received a distinction, which places me in the top two of the year."



The overwhelming success of the program goes beyond access. At the time of evaluation the Scholarships Program has a retention and graduation rate of 100 per cent. All Scholars who could have graduated by now based on the typical duration of their study have done so. This includes students who have graduated from leading international universities in the UK and North America including Oxford, Cambridge, the University of London, the Royal Academy of Music, Harvard, Columbia, NYU and the University of Winnipeg. The Scholars are trail blazing new international study pathways for Indigenous students which are reflected by a growing list of firsts that includes:

- the first Indigenous Australian to graduate with a Master's degree from Cambridge
- the first Indigenous Australian to graduate with a Master's degree from Oxford
- the first Indigenous Australian to graduate with a Doctor of Philosophy from Oxford
- the first Indigenous Australian to receive a Doctor of Philosophy scholarship only open to Oxford graduates
- the first Indigenous Australian Rhodes Scholar (we have now have 3 associated with Aurora)

³⁰ University and government stakeholder interviews, 2017.

- the first Indigenous Australian from a remote community (Broome) to graduate from Oxford.³¹

The Scholarships Program is contributing to the representation of Indigenous Australians in professions, academia and other positions of influence in society.³² All scholars have entered the workforce across diverse fields including law, teaching, architecture, public service, management consulting, academia and the arts. Each of the graduates from the program are working in Australia except one, who is working at a top-tier firm in the UK.³³

"I don't think I would have my current job if I had studied domestically. They basically created a position for me. I get more respect (at work) for having a doctorate from one of the best universities in the world."



The impact of the Scholarships Program on Scholars' long-term employment outcomes is, to an extent, yet to be seen. However, the early indicators are promising. Most Scholars reported that graduating from leading international universities with their qualifications has given them more credibility than an equivalent from an Australian university would have. For scholars who are currently studying, there was a general belief that succeeding at a leading international university would provide them greater access to academic and employment opportunities once they graduated.³⁴

This is consistent with the fact that Scholars are already employed in positions of influence ranging from lecturers and researchers to barristers and board members. There is great potential for the Scholarships Program to help address the under-representation of Indigenous Australians in professions, academia and other positions of influence in society if the early indicators of employment outcomes are sustained. A number of current Scholars and graduates have been offered employment at top-tier consulting firms, which is a pathway often taken by high-achieving non-Indigenous students.

Scholars and staff highlighted the role of the Scholarship Program in fostering Indigenous leaders as the most exciting potential long-term impact of the Scholarships Program as it matures. Scholars often expressed an aspiration to become leaders in mainstream Australian society and act as role models for other Indigenous students.³⁵

Figure 4: Scholar reflection on academic and employment opportunities

For **Maddie**, studying at a prestigious international university has created so many opportunities. She has been able to use the prestige of her university to build international networks that she can rely on when not in Australia. She feels her university's name was a big reason why she secured work at a top-tier firm following her scholarship. Her qualifications have also created a high level of credibility that has resulted in her directors showing confidence in her to take on challenging tasks above her role description.

³¹ Aurora, program documentation.

³² University and government stakeholder interviews, 2017.

³³ Aurora, program documentation. The Scholar working in the UK has returned to work in Australia.

³⁴ Scholar interviews, 2016-17.

³⁵ Scholar interviews, 2016-17; Staff interviews, 2016-17.

5.2 The supports provided through the Scholarships Program have strongly contributed to Scholars' outcomes

The evidence collected for this evaluation suggests the financial and other supports provided through the Scholarships Program have strongly contributed to Scholars' outcomes. Stakeholders identified the following:

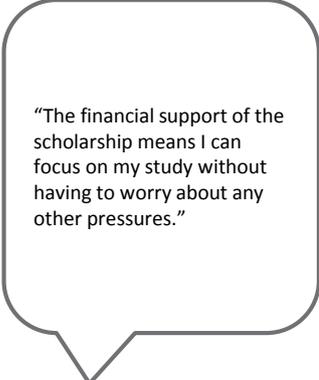
- Financial support provided through the Scholarships Program opened up opportunities for Scholars and facilitated their success.
- The network of Scholars and Aurora staff provided invaluable support and motivation.
- Studying at leading international universities built Scholars' confidence and connected them to leading academics in their fields.

Each of these aspects of the Scholarships Program is discussed below.

Financial assistance opened up opportunities and enabled greater success

Scholars consistently highlighted the provision of financial assistance as the core benefit of the Scholarships Program. This included:

- **Tuition fees**, which removed the initial barrier for Scholars' to study overseas.
- **Ongoing stipends**, so Scholars could focus on their studies while they were overseas. Stipends provided by the Program are higher than the standard set by the UK Research Councils, in recognition that Scholars may not have other resources to rely on.
- **Funding to visit Oxbridge colleges prior to commencement**, enabling Scholars to make informed decisions about their residential arrangements. Scholars and staff recognised the important role this played in setting the scholars up for success.³⁶
- **Additional funding on an ad hoc basis**, particularly for Scholars to return to Australia for funerals and other personal reasons. These visits had a substantial positive impact on Scholars' emotional wellbeing. Staff also recognised that this is one of the program's strengths.³⁷



"The financial support of the scholarship means I can focus on my study without having to worry about any other pressures."



Financial support was critical; the financial cost of overseas study often discouraged Scholars from even considering it. Alleviating the financial stress of study at a leading overseas university allowed Scholars to meaningfully engage with the possibility of overseas study and remain focused on their academic achievement once overseas.³⁸

³⁶ Scholar interviews, 2016-17; Staff interviews, 2016-17.

³⁷ Scholar interviews, 2016-17; Staff interviews, 2016-17.

³⁸ Scholar interviews, 2016-17.

Figure 5: Scholar reflection on the benefits of financial support³⁹

Andrew was focused on attending Oxford and once he was accepted immediately started looking for financial support. Even though the application process had closed, Aurora was flexible and allowed him to put together an application. Andrew is so grateful for this opportunity, as the financial support has provided him with a sense of financial stability and social security. Although he would have come over without a scholarship, he can now focus purely on his studies. The financial support also enabled him to visit Oxford colleges during the May Tour before he started. This allowed him to make an informed decision about where he was going to live for the next year of his life.

The network of Scholars and Aurora staff provided invaluable support and motivation

The Scholarships Program connects Scholars with a network of likeminded peers who encourage and motivate one another to pursue academic excellence. Scholars frequently reflected during interviews that they relied quite heavily on one another for ongoing encouragement and motivation during study. For Scholars who started in the program earlier on, the support of their Indigenous peers was important to help address feelings of homesickness and to overcome the challenges of studying at a leading international university. This enabled the scholars to adapt to their new environment through shared experience with their peers and build their confidence in their ability to be successful.⁴⁰

As the cohort of students has grown larger, this network has become larger and stronger and remains crucial to their emotional and cultural wellbeing. Aurora staff reinforced the important role the Study Tour played in introducing potential Scholars to current Scholars. This facilitated the development of a network of support for Scholars before they had begun their study, with many applicants receiving advice on their applications from current scholars.⁴¹



"[The Aurora Fellow] has been invaluable and helped me to navigate some difficult territory during the first semester. This program helps cultivate a highly educated Indigenous community. We have regular contact and rely on each other for grounding."

Scholars also benefited from the financial, emotional and practical assistance that Aurora staff provided. This assistance began during the application phase, with Aurora providing feedback to Scholars on their various applications and practical support when needed, such as passport and visa applications. Aurora staff highlighted this as one of the program's strengths.⁴² Scholars valued the flexibility of assistance Aurora provided during this period. Scholars studying in the UK also valued the practical, educational and pastoral support the Aurora Fellow provided. This included during: transition to Oxford and Cambridge with advice on how to navigate administrative systems; educational growth through academic advice and their personal wellbeing during difficult times.⁴³

³⁹ These reflections and those that follow in Section 5 are based on: Scholar interviews, 2016-17; and the Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

⁴⁰ Scholar interviews, 2016-17.

⁴¹ Staff interviews, 2016-17.

⁴² Staff interviews, 2016-17.

⁴³ Scholar interviews, 2016-17.

Figure 6: Scholar reflection on the importance of meeting other Scholars

For **Lucy**, one of the real strengths of the program is the network of scholars. She has been able to make great friends who she can socialise with and receive academic support from. In particular, she has noticed how the more experienced Scholars, who have been around the universities for longer, are quick to offer great advice on how things work. Lucy also appreciates the great academic and social support she received from the Aurora fellow. Having an encouraging network really eased the overwhelming feeling she felt from starting at a new university. This experience motivated Lucy to act as a mentor herself.

Studying at leading international universities built Scholars' confidence and connected them to leading academics in their fields

Studying at leading international universities built Scholars' confidence in their academic ability. Scholars not only received formal acknowledgement of their academic acumen (i.e. through university assessment), but benefited from engaging with intellectually motivated and interesting peers. Some Scholars reported that this shifted their perception of themselves. Initially, they had felt overwhelmed, because they had felt intellectually "out of their depth". Gradually, however, their confidence improved and this flowed into other aspects of their senses of self.⁴⁴

Studying at leading international universities also connected Scholars with leading international academics. Scholars consistently reported that they would not have had access to academics of the same stature and quality if studying in Australia.⁴⁵

A small number of Scholars noted the importance of temporarily distancing themselves from Australian identity politics. Studying overseas had given them temporary reprieve from the negative connotations of Indigeneity. This has given them confidence to explore other areas of interest.⁴⁶ One university stakeholder highlighted the importance of this aspect of the Scholarships Program, indicating it gives Scholars a reprieve from what can be an inflexible model of identity, because most people they interact with at the universities they attend are not even aware they are Indigenous.⁴⁷

Figure 7: Scholar reflection on the academic confidence and connections built whilst studying

The Scholarship Program has had an enormous impact on **Michael**. Studying overseas allows him to learn from leading international Indigenous academics. This exposes him to new Indigenous perspectives and renews his thinking and approaches to Indigenous Australian policies and issues. Michael now feels more confident in his chosen field. Michael feels like the expertise he has gained from studying overseas has set him up as a respected leader in his field. Government agencies in Australia have already approached him for work because of this. Through studying overseas Michael has developed an international network with other Indigenous scholars, which is something he feels is extremely valuable now and into the future.

⁴⁴ Scholar interviews, 2016-17.

⁴⁵ Scholar interviews, 2016-17.

⁴⁶ Scholar interviews, 2016-17.

⁴⁷ University and government stakeholder interviews, 2017.

6 The Study Tour has supported Indigenous students to make informed decisions about study at leading international universities

The Study Tour has enabled Indigenous students to explore opportunities to study at leading international universities and to realise they are achievable. Many participants have returned from the Study Tour resolved to pursue study overseas, either immediately or in the future. Others have decided to pursue study or employment in Australia. In either case the Study Tour has helped participants to make better informed decisions about their pathways.

Stakeholders attributed the success of the Study Tour to the opportunities it provides for participants to interact – and “hold their own” – with academics and students at leading international universities, experience first-hand what makes each university different, and be part of a network of high-achieving Indigenous students. Aurora enables these opportunities for students through the extensive preparation it undertakes each year to promote the Tour, select participants and prepare them to make the most of it.

6.1 The Study Tour has enabled its participants to explore and aspire to study at leading international universities

The impact of the Study Tour is most evident in the pathways of the 27 participants who have subsequently studied at leading international universities. However, it is not limited to them. Almost all agreed the Study Tour made them feel that overseas study is achievable and helped them make informed decisions about whether to pursue it.

Whether participants ultimately decided to pursue overseas study depended on a range of factors. Some of these factors related specifically to the overseas universities and courses participants were considering and the career opportunities they would create. Participants also considered personal factors, such as their responsibilities to their partners and families. In some cases these personal factors were more significant drivers of their decisions.

This section assesses the Study Tour’s impact through an in-depth analysis of its role in the decision-making processes of participants in the 2016 cohort and a broader analysis of the pathways of all participants to date.

The Study Tour has helped participants to make informed decisions and to realise study at leading international institutions is achievable

Participants in the 2016 cohort reported that they made their decisions about whether (and where) to study overseas based on a range of considerations. These included:

- **university characteristics**, including prestige, location and research strength in their discipline
- **course characteristics**, including structure, duration and availability of a suitable supervisor
- **scholarships**, including value and availability
- **career implications**, including both the benefits from studying overseas and the drawbacks of taking a career break in terms of skills and foregone income

- **personal commitments**, including those to partners and families as well as financial commitments.⁴⁸

The relative importance of each of these factors varied across participants. Some participants had already decided to apply to study overseas at the time they left for the Study Tour and were primarily interested in exploring university characteristics, course characteristics, scholarships and career benefits. Through the Study Tour, some found that their original preference (for example, for study in the US over the UK) was not the right fit for them, and re-shaped their plans.

Participants varied in the decisions they had reached about overseas study following the Study Tour:

- 37 per cent intended to apply to study overseas to commence in the following year
- 21 per cent intended to apply to study overseas to commence in a subsequent year
- 26 per cent intended to continue studying in Australia.⁴⁹

Many of those who intended to continue studying in Australia expressed interest in pursuing overseas opportunities at some point, either for a post-doctoral position or for research as part of Australian postgraduate degree, but they did not have firm plans to do so.⁵⁰

While participants varied in the decisions they had reached, they were consistent in their views on the Study Tour's impact. Almost all agreed the Study Tour had:

- made them more aware of opportunities to attend leading international universities
- given them a better understanding of what was required to be successful at these universities
- helped them to make informed choices about postgraduate study
- made them feel that study at leading international universities was a real possibility for them (see Figure 8 below).

Even participants who intended to continue their studies in Australia reported they returned from the Study Tour feeling more confident, informed and energised about the paths they were taking.⁵¹

Figure 8: Survey results relating to the impact of the Study Tour



Participants in previous cohorts have reported similar views on the role of the Study Tour and its impact. Those who responded to a survey had taken varied pathways after the Study Tour, including study

⁴⁸ This information was drawn from a post-Study Tour survey of participants from the 2016 cohort, which had 18 responses.

⁴⁹ This information was not available for a further 11 per cent of participants.

⁵⁰ This information was drawn from interviews conducted with past and current Study Tour participants in 2016 and 2017, as well as their written reflections, but focuses specifically on those in the 2016 cohort; Post-Study Tour survey, 2016.

⁵¹ Post-Study Tour survey, 2016.

overseas, study in Australia and full- or part-time employment (as is discussed in further detail below). But all agreed the Study Tour had influenced their pathways, by helping them to decide where to study overseas, encouraging them to pursue further study overseas or in Australia, or encouraging them to pursue careers (particularly in the Indigenous sector) in Australia.⁵²

Stakeholders from leading international universities in the UK and the US particularly identified a shift in participant aspirations across the life of the Study Tour. They identified that recent study tour cohorts were collectively more confident in their aspirations to study at a leading overseas university than previous cohorts. They attributed this mainly to a growing presence of Indigenous students on campus who act as trailblazers and role models and instil greater confidence in Study Tour participants that their aspirations are achievable.⁵³

The Study Tour has increased Indigenous students' uptake of Charlie Perkins and Roberta Sykes Scholarships as well as other opportunities to study at leading international universities

The Study Tour has helped to increase Indigenous students' uptake of Charlie Perkins Scholarships, Roberta Sykes Scholarships and other opportunities to study at leading international universities. 34 Indigenous students who participated in a Study Tour from 2011 to 2015 – or 41 per cent of the total – have subsequently applied to leading international universities. 28 of these participants were accepted, including:

- 24 who studied overseas on Charlie Perkins or Roberta Sykes Scholarships
- two who studied overseas on other scholarships
- one who self-funded their study overseas
- one who declined and instead pursued an Australian postgraduate degree.

Past Study Tour participants make up 67 per cent of Charlie Perkins and Roberta Sykes Scholars.⁵⁴

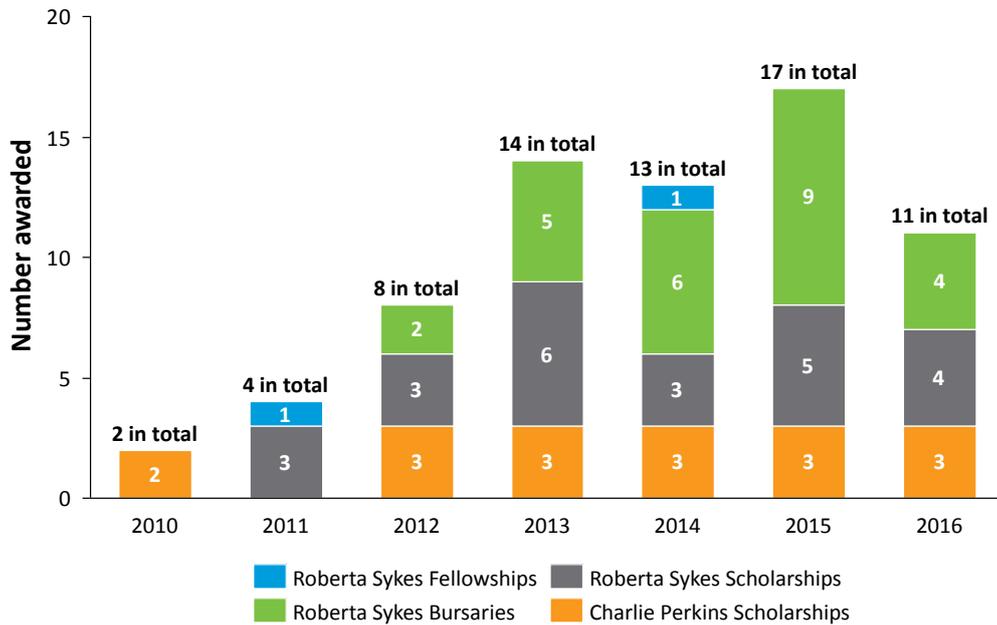
The number of scholarships awarded has grown from two in 2010 to more than 10 per year since 2012, including three Charlie Perkins Scholarships per year and three to five Roberta Sykes Scholarships per year (as shown in Figure 11 overleaf). This has resulted in a growing cohort of Indigenous students attending leading international universities where none or very few had previously attended.

⁵² Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

⁵³ University and government stakeholder interviews, 2017.

⁵⁴ Aurora, program documentation.

Figure 9: Number of scholarships, bursaries and fellowships



Aurora, program documentation

The six participants who were not accepted, and the 50 who have not applied, have pursued a range of education and career pathways. Data is not available for all of these participants, but of those who responded to a survey, 48 per cent had pursued further study in Australia.⁵⁵

In interviews a number of these participants expressed an intention to study overseas at some point in the future.⁵⁶ This is consistent with the experiences of the participants who have applied to study overseas, some of whom waited several years after the Study Tour before doing so.⁵⁷

6.2 The Study Tour’s combination of activities has enabled its impact

A number of strengths of the Study Tour enabled the impacts described in Section 6.1. Stakeholders identified that:

- Aurora effectively promoted the Study Tour and prepared participants to make the most of it.
- Interactions with academics and students at leading international universities boosted participants’ confidence and helped them realise study at these universities was a real possibility.
- First-hand experiences of what made each university different helped participants to make informed decisions.

⁵⁵ Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17. These figures were calculated based on the 39 past Study Tour participants who responded to this question and identified themselves. A further four participants responded to this question but did not identify themselves, and hence it was not clear whether they studied overseas or received a scholarship.

⁵⁶ Study Tour participant interviews, 2016-17.

⁵⁷ Aurora, program documentation.

- The Study Tour created a community of participants who support and motivate each other and return to Australia inspired to motivate others.

Each of these aspects of the Study Tour is discussed below.

Aurora effectively promoted the Study Tour and prepared participants to make the most of it

One enabler of Study Tour's impact has been the extensive preparation Aurora undertakes each year, from promoting the Tour, to selecting applicants, to preparing participants to make the most of it.

Aurora's success in promoting the Tour is evident in the number of Indigenous students who apply each year. Since 2011, there have been 40 applications per year on average from high achieving Indigenous students around Australia. The number of applications has typically exceeded two to three times the number of places available. This positive response is due to Aurora's promotion of the Study Tour via:

- **Indigenous higher education units** – this was the channel through which most Study Tour participants who responded to a survey had heard about the Study Tour.⁵⁸
- **Word of mouth** – most 2016 participants had heard about the Study Tour from former participants.⁵⁹
- **Social media** – 2016 participants who participated in interviews indicated Aurora had raised awareness of the Study Tour and the Scholarships Program through social media.⁶⁰

Aurora could expand its promotion of the Study Tour to ensure no high achieving Indigenous students miss out (as is discussed in Section Appendix A), but its current efforts provide a strong starting point.

Aurora has successfully prepared participants for the Study Tour through the application process and pre-Tour activities. Aurora has continued to improve its pre-Tour activities each time it has run the Study Tour, with the expansion of the Sydney-based workshop to two days and the addition of an interview process for example (as discussed in Section 4). Aurora staff reported these changes had ensured the 2016 cohort of participants was the best prepared since the Study Tour began.⁶¹

This is evident in the positive experiences of these participants, who reported that the application process was responsive to their individual needs and circumstances. The pre-Tour briefing and skype meetings helped to prepare them for the Study Tour and boosted their confidence.⁶² Over 90 per cent of those who responded to a survey agreed the group skype call was beneficial and the pre-Tour scholarship information sessions were helpful or very helpful. Over 80 per cent agreed the Sydney-based workshops and the handbook they received were helpful or very helpful.⁶³

Interactions with academics and students at leading international universities boosted participants' confidence and helped them realise study at these universities was a real possibility

Participants' experiences on the Study Tour helped them realise that overseas study is achievable. This is evident in the 94 per cent of the 2016 cohort who agreed the Study Tour made them feel that study at leading international universities was a real possibility for them.⁶⁴ Participants' interactions with academics and students at the universities were particularly important in this regard.

Some participants described experiences in which they had presented ideas to academics in their field, who had expressed their support and offered to collaborate with them through PhDs and other research

⁵⁸ Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

⁵⁹ Post Study Tour survey, 2016-17.

⁶⁰ Study Tour participant interviews, 2016-17.

⁶¹ Staff interviews, 2016-17.

⁶² Study Tour participant interviews, 2016-17.

⁶³ Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17; post-Study Tour survey, 2016-17.

⁶⁴ Post-Study Tour survey, 2016-17.

opportunities. Others described experiences in which they had attended lectures and interacted with students and found that they were able to understand and engage with the content being discussed. Participants' experiences of "holding their own" made them more confident they could succeed in these environments and, in some cases, counteracted their feelings of "imposter syndrome".⁶⁵

Figure 10: Study Tour participant reflection on the impact of the Study Tour on confidence⁶⁶

Libby was blown away by how much her confidence improved from being involved in the Study Tour. Holding conversations with leading academics in her areas of her interest, and realising other Indigenous students had followed these pathways before, renewed her sense of motivation and her confidence in her ability to succeed in places like Harvard, Stanford and Oxford.

First-hand experiences of what made each university different helped participants to make informed decisions

Study Tour participants' first-hand experiences of different universities helped them to make informed decisions about their academic pathways. In interviews and survey responses participants highlighted certain activities that were particularly beneficial in this regard:

- Physically visiting universities allowed participants to experience firsthand what made each of them different.
- Meetings with academic staff helped participants to understand the courses available and the way different universities and departments worked.
- Meetings with administrative staff helped participants to understand application and admission processes.
- Activities organised through the Native American centres provided scholars with access to Indigenous voices on campus who shared their experiences of higher education and provided new perspectives on the pros and cons of particular universities.⁶⁷

The impact of these activities is reflected in the survey responses of the most recent cohort of participants. 95 per cent of respondents indicated the Study Tour helped them to identify potential supervisors and/or other important contacts at leading overseas universities. The same proportion indicated the Study Tour had helped them to make an informed choice about postgraduate study (in Australia or overseas).⁶⁸

Figure 11: Study Tour participant reflection on the role of the Study Tour in their decision-making

Visiting each university helped **Latiesha** realise that every one of them was unique. She found there was huge variation in the physical campuses, the attitudes of the faculty and staff, and the aims and focuses of the universities as globally recognised institutes. The Study Tour provided her with all the information she needed to make a decision about her future.

⁶⁵ Study Tour participant interviews, 2016-17.

⁶⁶ These reflections and those that follow in Section 6 are based on: Study Tour participant interviews, 2016-17; and the Study Tour participant and Scholar survey, 2016-17.

⁶⁷ Study Tour participant interviews, 2016-17.

⁶⁸ Post Study Tour survey, 2016-17.

The Study Tour created a community of participants who support and motivate each other and return to Australia inspired to motivate others

The Study Tour introduced scholars to a network of high achieving Indigenous scholars who support and motivate one another to pursue academic excellence. This is reflected the more than 80 per cent of the 2016 cohort of the Study Tour who agreed that they:

- built a network of support among their peers from the Study Tour
- feel a sense of belonging with their peers from the Study Tour.⁶⁹

A number of scholars highlighted the important role the diversity of the cohort of students played in allowing scholars to explore their Indigenous identity in a safe space.⁷⁰

The diversity of their educational backgrounds allowed Scholars to learn about and engage with a wide range of disciplines and inspired them to learn more about what their Indigenous peers were achieving in Australia. It also provided an opportunity for participants to learn from each other about the academic opportunities available to them.

The engagement of current Scholars during the Tour provided participants with role models and the opportunity to learn from those who had gone before. One university stakeholder reported that seeing Indigenous students who had studied at leading international universities reinforced Study Tour participants' confidence that they could do the same.⁷¹ Participants' reported they valued the first-hand knowledge Scholars shared of their experience as Indigenous students studying at a leading international university. This provided perspectives and information that Aurora and university staff-members were unable to provide.⁷²

Similarly, participants valued the presence of Cultural Liaison Officers (CLOs) on the Tour who had previously been on the Tour themselves. The CLOs provided important pastoral care from the perspectives of an Indigenous student and past Study Tour participant. Participants highlighted that the presence of a female and a male mentor was also important to ensure gender specific support was available through the tour.⁷³

A number of stakeholders were excited by the potential the growing cohort of students has to inspire Indigenous students across Australia to reach for academic excellence. Through their experiences they hope to raise the expectations of those they come in contact with back in Australia including students, academics, family and community. Many participants spoke about influencing their peers and the students they teach in Australia to take on the opportunities the Study Tour and the Scholarships Program provide. In the long-term, participants envisage this program and the Scholarships Program enabling more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to earn world class qualifications in Australia or overseas and take on leadership roles in the community and influence Indigenous policy.⁷⁴

Figure 12: Study Tour participant reflection on being part of a high achieving Indigenous student cohort

Jason found the network with the other students participating on the Tour an integral part of the trip. He now has a network of Indigenous students that will support him to achieve his study goals. Greg is also excited by the potential of these students to make real change in Australia concerning the treatment and education of Indigenous people.

⁶⁹ Post-Study Tour survey, 2016-17.

⁷⁰ Study Tour participant interviews, 2016-17.

⁷¹ University and government stakeholder interviews, 2017.

⁷² Study Tour participant interviews, 2016-17.

⁷³ Study Tour participant interviews, 2016-17.

⁷⁴ Study Tour participant interviews, 2016-17.

Appendix A List of Scholarships, Bursaries and Fellowships

The Scholarships Program comprises a range of scholarships for Indigenous students to undertake postgraduate study overseas (see 1). This includes:

- postgraduate degrees
- short executive education programs
- research as part of Australia postgraduate degrees.

The scholarships have evolved over time to meet the study preferences of Indigenous students and increase access to a greater number of leading international universities. The Charlie Perkins Scholarship was the first to be awarded, in 2010, followed by the Roberta Sykes Scholarship, the Roberta Sykes Harvard Club Scholarship and the Roberta Sykes Harvard Club Fellowship, in 2011. The Roberta Sykes Harvard Club Bursary was introduced in 2012, the Roberta Sykes Chief Executive Women Bursary in 2014 and the Roberta Sykes Fellowship in 2014.

Table 1: The scholarships and their attributes

| Scholarship | Degree type | University | Terms |
|---|---|------------------------------------|---|
| Charlie Perkins Scholarship | Postgraduate degree | Cambridge or Oxford | All fees and travel costs, as well as an annual stipend, for up to three years |
| Roberta Sykes Harvard Club Scholarship | | Harvard | Up to \$60,000 per year for the duration of the degree |
| Roberta Sykes Scholarship | | Any recognised overseas university | Up to \$30,000 per year for up to three years (to be combined with other awards). |
| Roberta Sykes Chief Executive Women Bursary | Short executive education program | INSEAD | Up to approximately \$20,000 for the duration of the program |
| Roberta Sykes Harvard Club Bursary | | Harvard | |
| Roberta Sykes Bursary | | Any recognised overseas university | |
| Roberta Sykes Harvard Club Fellowship | Research as part of an Australian postgraduate degree | Harvard | Up to \$20,000 for one year |
| Roberta Sykes Fellowship | | Any recognised overseas university | |

Since the inception of the Scholarships Program Aurora has received 183 applications. Over a third of these applicants have been successful in gaining admission. This reflects the high standard of applications as acceptance rates for graduate students at leading international universities such as

Oxford and Cambridge are usually around 20 per cent.⁷⁵ Scholars are required to gain entry on their own merits.⁷⁶

The Trusts have awarded:

- 17 Charlie Perkins Scholarships to undertake a postgraduate degree
- 24 Roberta Sykes Scholarships or Harvard Club Scholarships to undertake a postgraduate degree
- 26 Roberta Sykes Bursaries or Harvard Club Bursaries to undertake a short executive education program
- 2 Roberta Sykes Fellowships or Harvard Club Fellowships to undertake research as part of an Australian postgraduate degree.

All students who have been offered these scholarships, fellowships and bursaries have taken them up except one, who turned down a scholarship to pursue a PhD in Australia. A small number of students have received multiple scholarships, including one who received first a Charlie Perkins and then a Roberta Sykes Scholarship, and four who have received two Roberta Sykes Scholarships. Further information on the outcomes for students who have taken up these opportunities is included in Section 5.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ University of Cambridge, *Graduate Admissions Office statistics*, 2016; University of Oxford, *Admissions Statistics*, 2016, accessed 7 May 2017: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/admissions-statistics?wssl=1>.

⁷⁶ University and government stakeholder interviews, 2017.

⁷⁷ Aurora, program documentation.