

THE
P/NNACLE
FOUNDATION

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Are We
Making
Difference?

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Foreword

I am delighted to share the results of the latest triennial research, which explores the impact and effectiveness of our flagship scholarships and mentoring program. This research is a valuable source of feedback and will inform future program enhancements.

Pleasingly, the research results are remarkable and inspiring with 100% of respondents confirming they would recommend the Pinnacle program to others, 99% reporting the program had supported their overall well-being, and 98% of alumni having successfully completed their studies. These findings reflect the positive and lasting effects that The Pinnacle Foundation's scholarship and mentoring program has on the lives of young LGBTQIA+ Australians.

The research also highlights some opportunities for future focus. For instance, 88% of alumni noted an interest to volunteer with us. While we already have a significant number of alumni who actively volunteer with us, the research shows there is great scope to better leverage more of our incredibly talented and passionate alumni cohort.

We are very grateful to all the respondents who took part in this survey and shared their honest and constructive feedback. We appreciate their time and effort in helping us improve our work and serve our beneficiaries better. I would also like to thank the stakeholder group who worked diligently to produce this research.

We are very proud of all our scholars and alumni who have achieved remarkable outcomes through our program. They are truly an inspiration to us all.

Andrew Staite
Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director, The Pinnacle Foundation
November 2023

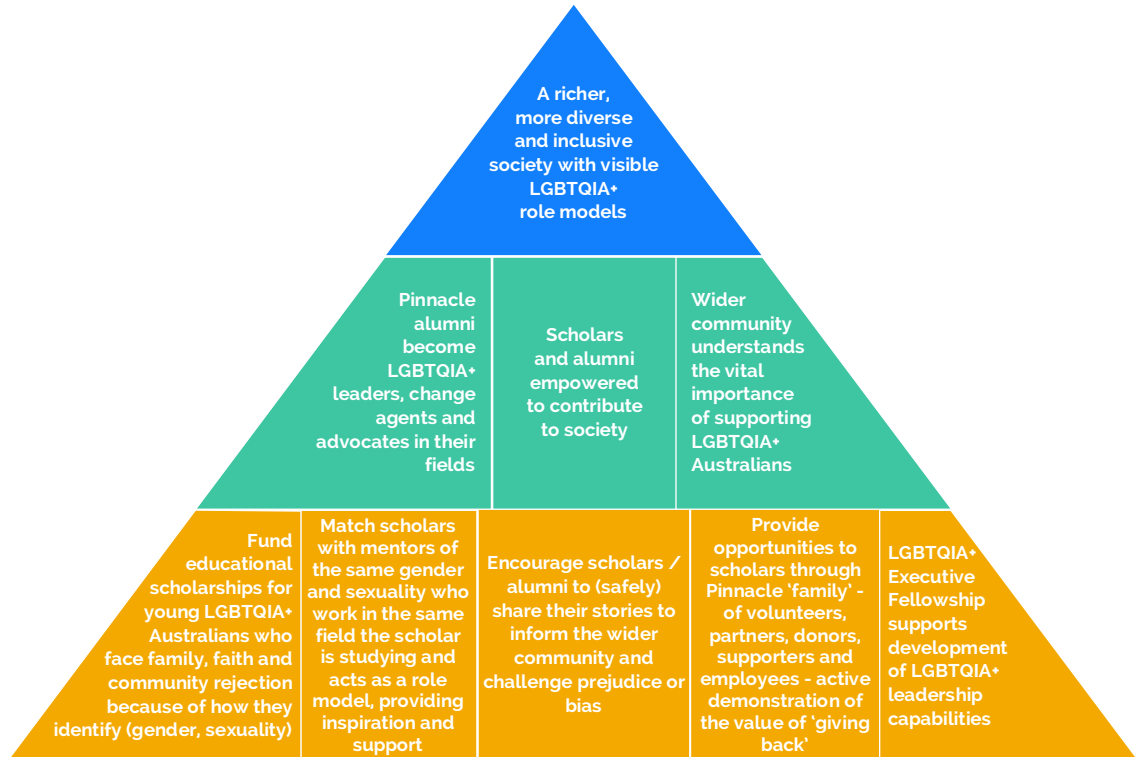
Theory of Change

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

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

Our work is driven by our vision for a more diverse and inclusive society with visible LGBTQIA+ role models. We provide educational scholarships, mentoring and opportunities for young LGBTQIA+ Australians to realise their full potential and overcome challenge arising from their identity.

Theory of Change Model (Planning Triangle)



Our Values



Are We Making a Difference?

Are We Making a Difference? is a research project capturing the academic achievements, personal development, and experience of those young LGBTQIA+ Australians who have participated in The Pinnacle Foundation's scholarship program – both past and present.

The initial *Are We Making a Difference?* research was conducted in 2017 with the intention to survey the scholar and alumni cohort triennially to track their progress and to identify any improvements that may be implemented to the scholarship and alumni programs. The research aims to evaluate:

- The organisational support scholars and alumni (respondents) receive from their involvement with The Pinnacle Foundation.
- The successes of the program by measuring the respondents course completion rates, academic achievement, general well-being, and integration into the LGBTQIA+ community.

We sought responses to several questions:

- (1) Whether the respondents have completed their studies and if they are working in an industry related to their course.
- (2) Whether the respondents thought that their time with The Pinnacle Foundation had helped them attain their academic goals.
- (3) In what ways can the Foundation help respondents to increase their overall experience/well-being?
- (4) How supported did the respondent feel by The Pinnacle Foundation?
- (5) In what ways has each respondent's time with The Pinnacle Foundation affected their life post tertiary education, via the following measures:
 - By gaining internships and employment.
 - By providing a sense of community and support.
 - By assisting the respondent to complete their tertiary studies.
 - By assisting the respondent to develop changes to their study approach.
- (6) The respondent's relationship with their mentor, and how this relationship affected their experience as part of the program.
- (7) Whether respondents' time with The Pinnacle Foundation has meant that they have become more involved within the LGBTQIA+ community.

The impact that the financial support provided as part of the scholarship program had on respondents' well-being.

The research invited recommendations and feedback to improve service delivery for future scholars and alumni.

Method

A key stakeholder team designed the survey to understand:

- The impact The Pinnacle Foundation's scholarship program has on the overall well-being of both scholar and alumni respondents.
- Ways to further enhance alumni engagement.
- The value of the mentorship component of the program.

- Possible further development of networking and community building opportunities across the scholarship and alumni cycle.

The stakeholder team comprised:

- Alex Bradford – Pinnacle Foundation alumnus and quantitative analyst.
- Veronica Mason – Pinnacle Foundation alumnus, NSW Pinnacle Foundation alumni liaison lead and high-performance coach.
- Laura Cripps – Pinnacle Foundation scholar & mentor manager.
- Paula Corvalan – Pinnacle Foundation program manager.

223 respondents were sent the online survey leveraging Submittable software. Reminder emails were sent prompting action from those who failed to respond.

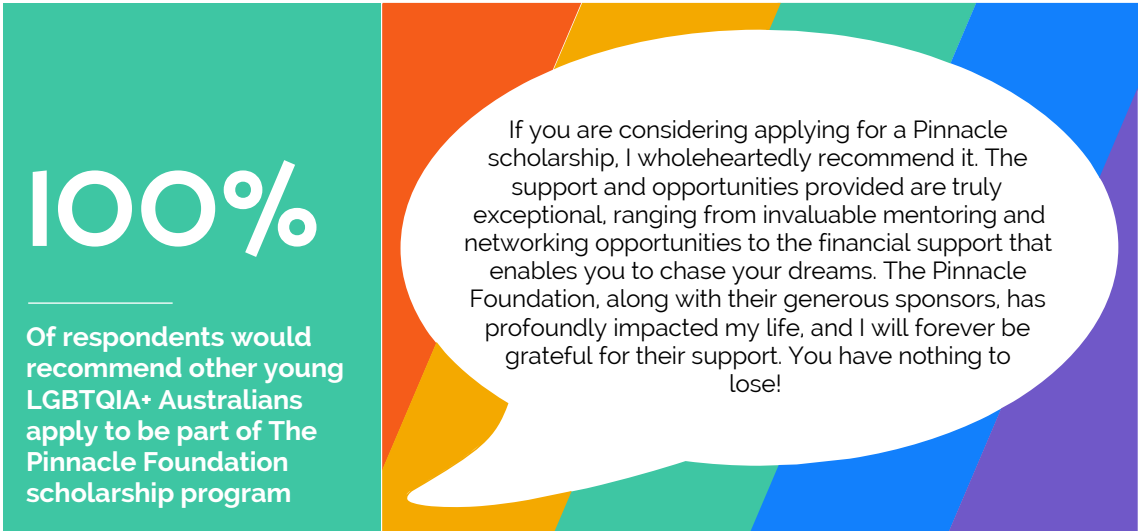
WhatsApp groups were created to reach both alumni and current scholars. Members of both groups were sent messages embedding the survey link to encourage participation and to reach those respondents who did not actively check their emails, or whose contact details may have been out of date. This approach was effective in updating out-of-date contact information and increasing response rates.

The questions variously invited open ended (text) responses, yes/ no answers, and Likert scales to capture the intensity of respondents' sentiments. Given all respondents had been directly involved in the Foundation's program, the neutral Likert response option was omitted to force a response one way or the other.

193 survey emails were successfully delivered to scholars and alumni. There were 30 respondents from the total email list (223) whose contact details were incorrect and whose current contact details could not be found. Overall, 50% of the survey recipients responded and provided in-depth, content rich responses.

[Key research highlights: Are We Making a Difference?](#)

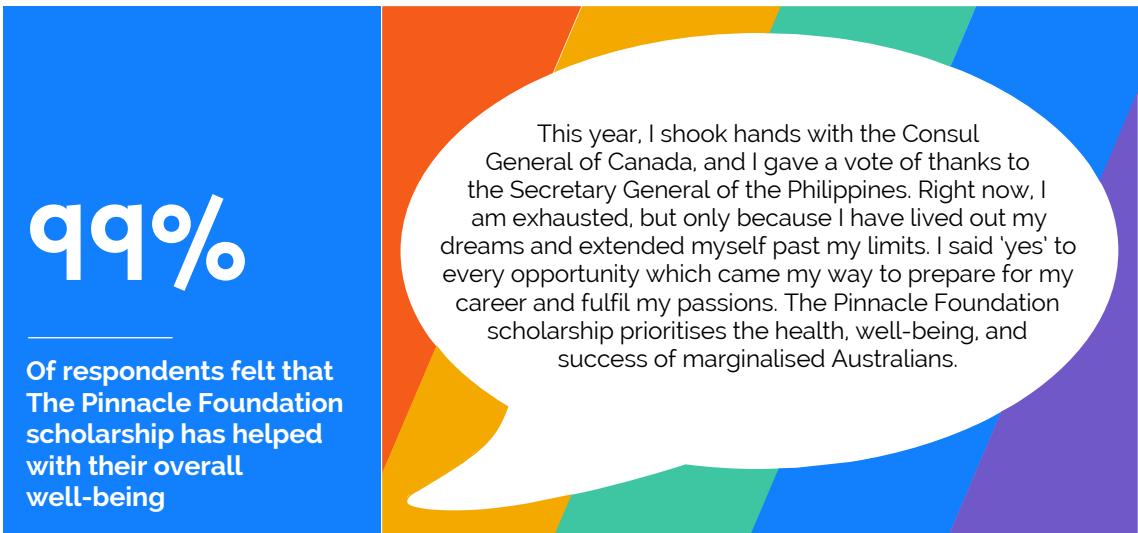
The key insights from the data received from the Are We Making a Difference? research responses highlight the effectiveness of The Pinnacle Foundation scholarship program. The findings show:



100%

Of respondents would recommend other young LGBTQIA+ Australians apply to be part of The Pinnacle Foundation scholarship program

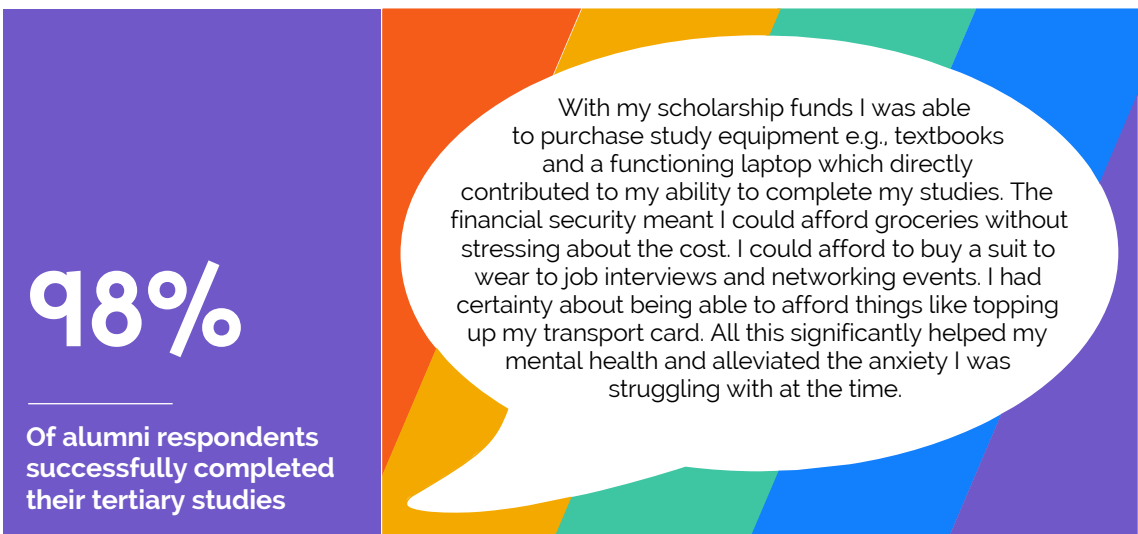
If you are considering applying for a Pinnacle scholarship, I wholeheartedly recommend it. The support and opportunities provided are truly exceptional, ranging from invaluable mentoring and networking opportunities to the financial support that enables you to chase your dreams. The Pinnacle Foundation, along with their generous sponsors, has profoundly impacted my life, and I will forever be grateful for their support. You have nothing to lose!



99%

Of respondents felt that The Pinnacle Foundation scholarship has helped with their overall well-being

This year, I shook hands with the Consul General of Canada, and I gave a vote of thanks to the Secretary General of the Philippines. Right now, I am exhausted, but only because I have lived out my dreams and extended myself past my limits. I said 'yes' to every opportunity which came my way to prepare for my career and fulfil my passions. The Pinnacle Foundation scholarship prioritises the health, well-being, and success of marginalised Australians.



98%

Of alumni respondents successfully completed their tertiary studies

With my scholarship funds I was able to purchase study equipment e.g., textbooks and a functioning laptop which directly contributed to my ability to complete my studies. The financial security meant I could afford groceries without stressing about the cost. I could afford to buy a suit to wear to job interviews and networking events. I had certainty about being able to afford things like topping up my transport card. All this significantly helped my mental health and alleviated the anxiety I was struggling with at the time.

95%

Of respondents felt The Pinnacle Foundation scholarship supported them to achieve their career aspirations, hopes and dreams.

The Pinnacle Foundation scholarship has been instrumental in helping me realise my career aspirations and dreams. It has provided me with invaluable opportunities, enabling me to concentrate on my studies and actively pursue career-related endeavours. Having a mentor through the Foundation has provided me with personalised guidance, allowing me to navigate the path to my career goals more effectively. These combined elements have given me the resources, focus and support necessary to pursue my ambitions in an empowered and confident manner.

94%

Of respondents felt like The Pinnacle Foundation enabled them to become more active in the LGBTQIA+ community

I am grateful that I have not only found the courage to stop isolating myself for weeks on end in my bedroom, but that this scholarship has introduced me to such a supportive and diverse community. I have been given many opportunities to connect with people I otherwise would not have met. Even if only for a few minutes, these connections broaden my worldview, and I will always be glad to have listened to someone new.

90%

Of respondents found great value in their relationship with their mentor

The most valuable component of my scholarship has been the mentorship I have received. My mentor's guidance greatly changed the trajectory of this year, as he is the reason I felt compelled to switch Honours projects into a field I feel much more passionate about.

89%

Of alumni respondents felt that the financial support received from The Pinnacle Foundation supported them with the completion of their studies

The financial security that I achieved as part of my Pinnacle scholarship allowed me to complete my studies and get the most out of my time at university. The financial support allowed me to work less jobs and I used that time to volunteer for the LGBTQIA+ community. I currently volunteer for The Pinnacle Foundation and other LGBTQIA+ organisations.

88%

Of alumni respondents felt like The Pinnacle Foundation provided a sense of community and support during their time as a scholar

The most surprising thing to me is that this scholarship ended up being about much more than money. I can still remember the day of our scholar induction, and everyone was talking about the 'Pinnacle family.' I admit, I was a bit sceptical at first, wondering if I would ever form such a tight bond with the people I was meeting. But you know what? I absolutely have. It has been almost two years now, but it feels like I have known these folks forever. The way that Pinnacle builds such a strong sense of community never ceases to amaze me.

88%

Of respondents stated that they were interested in volunteering with The Pinnacle Foundation

Being a Pinnacle scholar gave me the confidence to be fully out in my personal and professional life, as well as seek out volunteering opportunities within the community including with Pinnacle. I will continue volunteering with Pinnacle as I can see the value and impact the Foundation has had on my life and the life of others.



Conclusion

The Pinnacle Foundation's flagship scholarships and mentoring program has a positive and lasting impact on the well-being, social contribution, prosperity, and quality of life of young LGBTQIA+ Australians.

We see Pinnacle Foundation alumni thriving in their chosen careers, leading happy, healthy, and successful lives. They also inspire and seek to contribute to the next generation of incoming scholars, creating a virtuous cycle of excellence and generosity. They are not only beneficiaries of our programs, but also active members of our Pinnacle family. Many volunteer, donate, or serve as mentors for our scholars. They are proud to be part of our community and to give back to the cause that changed their lives.

We are proud of our scholars and alumni and their achievements, and grateful to the tremendous volunteers, donors and partners who make the program possible. We are committed to continuing our work and expanding our impact as we strive for a richer, more diverse, and inclusive society with visible LGBTQIA+ role models.

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