

NRL COWBOYS
HOUSE

OUR GRADUATES

As we reflect on the education journey of our 17 graduating students, it has been their remarkable resilience and ability to walk in two worlds that has driven their success. The strength and tenacity they have all shown in navigating new challenges while remaining true to their identity is testament to their unwavering commitment to their education and culture.

Congratulations to all of our 2022 graduates – it has been an honour to be part of your journey.

We wish you every success with your future endeavours.

Sam Smorfill

EDUCATION MANAGER, NRL COWBOYS HOUSE



Community
FOUNDATION



George Abednego

Starry-eyed and full of character, George Abednego is certainly no stranger to the spotlight – the NRL Cowboys House's resident showman is a superstar to everyone who meets him.

From Thursday Island, this gentle giant is strong and courageous, with his talents and efforts in acting and musicals a sure sign of his ability to step outside his comfort zone. George has become a strong leader in the boarding school halls, willing to help his House brothers particularly during study, something that will help him when he embarks on his future career aspirations in medicine.

Proving his leadership qualities, CDTSGT George Abednego was selected to represent the 151 Army Cadet Unit at Bamaga's Anzac Day dawn service and ceremony. He was joined by his family, including parents Frances and Terry Abednego.

George has made a name for himself in the local theatre scene, flourishing into an all-round entertainer. There's no business like show business for George, who played a starring role as Gaston in the Combined Schools Musical production of *Beauty and the Beast*, playing three times. He also picked up the guitar and sang at Ignatius Park College's Deadly Awards in October, just one month after placing second at Townsville Eisteddfod in the secondary school drama group category.

It's not just the arts that fills George's spare time with the Thursday Island teen also proving himself handy on the sporting field. George has represented teams across two codes, making the first 15 of the Ignatius Park College rugby union team, travelling to Rockhampton. He's also no stranger to the Sherrin, making the senior Ignatius Park College AFL side.

George will be sorely missed around NRL Cowboys House for his bright personality, and we look forward to seeing him shine on whichever of life's stages he chooses.



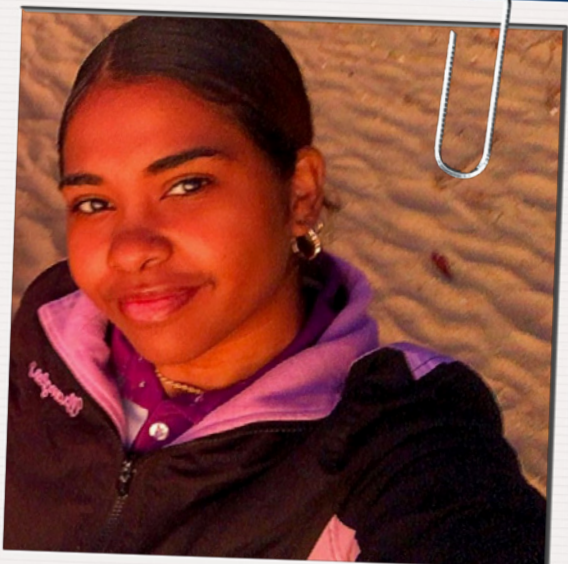
Brody Ah-Kit

A leader among NRL Cowboys House's senior students, Brody Ah-Kit is a happy-go-lucky student with an endearing sense of humour, whose intense focus on his future will ensure great success. Son of Vanita and Joel Ah-Kit, the Ignatius Park College house captain has become a role model for younger students both at school and at NRL Cowboys House.

Brody has narrowed his career aspirations down to three fields – social work, physiotherapy or electrical – with work experience at Ergon Energy already giving the Mornington Island teen a taste of what being an electrician could be like. In August he was one of seven students to graduate from the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation Scholarship Program, supporting students working towards their QCE.

On the sporting field, Brody has shown his versatility across a range of endeavours. Playing A-grade AFL for the Thuringowa Bulldogs, Brody was selected for the U17 Suns academy squad. He also played AFL for his school, Ignatius Park College, while he was a grand final winner with the under-18 Centrals rugby league side. Brody completed the trifecta of footy codes turning out for the Teachers West Rugby Union side.

Brody became a star during the House's annual NAIDOC Day celebrations, appearing on video to share his thoughts on the importance of learning from elders and sharing culture. Embracing his ancestry and stepping out of his comfort zone, Brody shared his hopes of learning about and handing down culture through generations. With his connection to culture and the right attitude to his education and sporting goals, we are sure Brody is heading into his future with a solid foundation to achieve his dreams.



Liana Bee

With aspirations of becoming the first First Nations female ranger back in her home community of Normanton, in the Gulf of Carpentaria, Liana's drive and commitment are sure to drive her in becoming a pioneer in this space.

A proud Gkuthaarn woman who loves to be around her family, including parents Sharelle Bee and Dylan Harrigan, Liana is excited to receive her Queensland Certificate of Education so she can return home and get straight to work with the local rangers. Attending school at Calvary Christian College, she is a keen and hardworking student who always makes significant effort to get her work done quickly and accurately.

While she loves being at home and spending time with her grandparents, and annoying her 18 cousins, Liana doesn't agree with her family's description of her as 'loud'. She is, however, a very determined young woman who is driven to succeed, is outgoing and full of life, and happy to play pranks on a few unwilling victims, especially on her mum, but also on House staff and fellow students.

When she's not focused on school, Liana enjoys plenty of interests, including music, sunsets and the moon – three very calming and spiritual things! Liana is also a Marvel fan, enjoys taking photos and watching NRL and Olympics track and field.

With her goal-orientated personality and playful nature, we have no doubt Liana will achieve success and make a pathway for the next generation of female rangers. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours, and in the words of Liana herself: "Peace, thanks Queen."



Josh Daniel

Having become a 'big brother' to many of the younger NRL Cowboys House boys, Josh Daniel is channelling his friendly, caring personality into a potential career in childcare or working with children. From Thursday Island, and son of Linda Daniel and Ronaldo Sailor, Josh says he will always remember his journey at NRL Cowboys House, with the message to his future self to "never regret your choices".

The opportunities for Josh at NRL Cowboys House will help shape his future after he found great enjoyment during his work experience at Barrier Reef Community Childcare. The Ignatius Park College student has also tried his hand at other endeavours, completing work experience as a marine mechanic. With the goal of achieving his QCE, Josh showed great determination and perseverance by adding two whole subjects to his workload in his final year.

Away from the classroom, Josh is fairly confident in attracting the girls, although the House staff aren't too sure if his twerking in the dorms is helping or hindering his hopes! Along with his hilarious quirks, Josh is a friendly, happy individual who encourages others to reach for the stars.

Josh will be remembered for his great manners and leadership and we are sure that he will choose pathways for success for himself and have the resilience to push through if times get tough.



Trefena Dugong

Trefena holds an exceptionally unique position at NRL Cowboys House as both a student and a House parent, exemplifying strength and caring for everyone she comes across.

Daughter to Christina, Trefena is a proud Mornington Island woman who loves sharing her knowledge of hunting and cultural practices from home. As one who takes great pride in helping others around the House, it's no surprise that Trefena hopes to forge a career in childcare or working with youth after graduation. Her experience as a House parent will help her on the right track, as will work experience at Barrier Reef Community Childcare.

Emotionally strong for her age and someone who wears her heart on her sleeve, Trefena is known around the House for her infectious laugh and is good at making others laugh too. She has been described as "without a doubt, the best smelling student" by her teacher at Queensland Pathways State College, after a hilarious moment in a budgeting lesson. When asked where she could possibly reduce spending, the witty teen proudly divulged her collection of 14 different perfume bottles! She's also known to be scared of small creatures and runs away screaming if her family chase her with anything!

The staff at NRL Cowboys House are very proud of the woman Trefena has become during her stay. Having flourished into a respected and approachable House parent, she has proven to everyone she is more than capable of achieving her career aspirations.



Described by House parents as “the okayest bloke on the planet”, Elijah Joe epitomises the role of an NRL Cowboys House senior, with his kind and caring nature making new brothers at the House feel welcome and safe.

From Mornington Island, son to Bernard and Isabelle Joe, Elijah himself is a father to a gorgeous daughter and shows his maturity and leadership qualities daily. Elijah hopes to study education at James Cook University and one day become an English and HPE teacher. His interest in health and physical education aligns with his passion for footy, as he hopes to also play rugby league at Queensland Cup level, having played for Townsville Blackhawks U18.

Elijah has amassed a long list of sporting credentials, including making the finals of the Phil Hall Cup and winning the Aaron Payne Cup as part of his school side, Ignatius Park College, while also making the Queensland Confraternity team along with North Queensland Rugby League Schoolboys and North Queensland Touch representation.

As House boarding captain, Elijah has compered numerous events and welcomed many House supporters and friends on their visits. Elijah was also MC for his school’s Deadly Awards at the end of 2022.

Juggling success in both sport and education, Elijah remains down to earth, leads by his actions, and is always fun to sit and chat with. He is seen as kind and caring, with mental strength ahead of his years and has a strong focus on building a bright future. Elijah is a fierce competitor and never gives up, strengths that will take him far in life no matter the path he chooses.



Boisterous and charismatic, Jaylee shows plenty of personality and life at NRL Cowboys House, but also knows how to knuckle down, working extremely hard on her schoolwork to pass all her subjects. From Mornington Island, daughter to Paul Linden and Desiree Rogers, Jaylee is an outgoing teenager who has shown great commitment towards finishing school strong.

With a keen interest to pursue a career in nursing, Jaylee also loves sport – mainly volleyball and basketball, which she plays with friends.

Having completed six weeks of work experience at Harvey Norman in the photo centre, Jaylee has a penchant for taking photos – although doing so on Tracey’s phone during study might not be quite the time for it!

As vice president of the NRL Cowboys House Interact Club, Jaylee is showing leadership and maturity through the service club and will take these skills and her ability to add sunshine to any room she enters into the bright future she creates for herself.



Larnie Mara

Known for her respectful conduct with staff and fellow students, Larnie Mara has had a very special connection to the House in her final year, proudly wearing her mum Margaret Mara's Indigenous artwork on the official House polo shirt and carrying her Old Mapoon community on her back everywhere she goes.

Larnie has shown a great sense of pride in her studies, especially through year 12, and admits she's had to work harder than she ever thought to graduate and achieve success in her final year at Calvary Christian College. In order to succeed, Larnie has worked hard on her studies outside designated times, learning that the hard yards of studying outside the classroom and study times at NRL Cowboys House is the key to improving. Larnie's favourite subject at school is woodwork, creating things she never imagined she would be able to.

Larnie's highlights at NRL Cowboys House outside the classroom are the weekend activities, including swimming and exploring in new places, with the best days out the ones where students had a whole cinema to themselves or travelling over to Magnetic Island. A usually quiet student, she can also be loud when Bobby is around showing her infectious and easy to get along with personality. Larnie has shown promise in leadership, stepping up to take the role of secretary in the House Interact Club.

Having developed a strong work ethic, Larnie is well placed to succeed in whatever path she chooses post-school. Larnie will stay connected to the House through her sister Rahu and will always hold a special place in the hearts of staff and students at NRL Cowboys House.



Jaylen McMullen

Dubbed the "Old man from Normanton", Jaylen McMullen proudly represented his home community at NRL Cowboys House as the only student from Normanton for some time.

Inspired by his grandmother to attend NRL Cowboys House, Jaylen has made great use of his time at his 'home away from home', becoming the resident barber on the Boys Campus. But he wasn't simply let loose with a pair of scissors, as the Kirwan State High student undertook work experience, assisting with cutting hair at JL Barbers. This has led to a career aspiration in the industry for Jaylen, who has suggested becoming a barber as his future calling or possibly a social worker.

Jaylen has been working hard to finish year 12, showing drive and determination and gaining important experience attending James Cook University's winter school.

Away from the trimmers, Jaylen has unfortunately become known for his sporting injuries, although his love of rugby league and rugby union doesn't keep him down. When he's not studying hard or on the sporting field, Jaylen loves the bush and spending time with his family, and is quite skilled at catching the elusive barramundi – a skill that makes many around NRL Cowboys House jealous!

With a close connection to his culture and family, we are looking forward to seeing Jaylen's progress post-school and may even need him back to address some of our students' interesting hairstyles. Known as a very good storyteller around the House, we look forward to hearing the stories he writes for himself in the coming years.



Tekelu Mene

Already signed to a North Queensland Toyota Cowboys junior contract, Warraber Island's Tekelu Mene has a bright future ahead in rugby league. With dreams of playing the sport he loves professionally, 'Tiki' has also been selected in the Queensland Emerging NRL squad, U17 Queensland Country Rugby League team and Townsville Blackhawks, and been part of the winning Confraternity side.

While he's already achieved so much on the field, Tiki is also firmly focused on building the foundations of a strong future through his school-based apprenticeship in civil construction and marine mechanics with Newlands Group, while attending Ignatius Park College.

Tiki has shown a strong work ethic by volunteering for kitchen duty at the House and is also a year-7 buddy, helping younger students at his school.

Son of Thomas and Patagm Mene, Tiki has grown immensely since day one at the House where he described himself as quiet, lost and feeling like a stranger. But writing a message to his future self, "don't quit, remember why you started," he has grown into a kind, caring, outgoing and friendly student who is now confident to challenge himself and achieve in both sport and education.

While he's been quietly chipping away at his career goals and sporting dreams, Tekelu certainly doesn't always fly under the radar at NRL Cowboys House – he's known for walking around campus with his big speakers, gaining the attention of staff and students.

As he moves into the next phase of his life, Tekelu is sure to achieve big things with his promise already shining through.



Rodneisha Mick

A lover of painting and all styles of craft, Rodneisha Mick is often found combining her passion for the arts with spending time with her siblings. A funny and caring student with a strong bond to her family, including parents Shonae O'Keefe and Soloman Mick, the Doomadgee teen has been working hard to channel her caring nature into a career.

Rodneisha has worked hard to obtain her Queensland Certificate of Education through Queensland Pathways State College (QPSC). She is already putting her career plans into action and has been completing work experience back home at Doomadgee State School, working with prep students. Loving the job, Rodneisha's goal is to now turn it into paid work.

The teachers back at QPSC were in fits of laughter when Rodneisha told the story of her volunteer work with prep students back home, resulting in her hiding from some 5-year-olds in a tree! We're hoping the preppies are kinder to her now.

Outside the classroom, Rodneisha is very creative and has produced some amazing artwork while at the House. She could often be found taking pictures of flowers or the sky using just her mobile phone.

We look forward to seeing Rodneisha at NRL Cowboys House not as a student but as an accomplished teacher in the future!



Manuifa Nona

Despite being a man of few words, Manu has made a big impact at NRL Cowboys House, with his funny personality endearing him to fellow students, for whom he has become like a big brother.

Hardworking and always willing to lend a helping hand, Manu has been working through his school-based apprenticeship in carpentry with BG Group while studying at Tec-NQ.

Manu has a strong connection to culture and enjoys hunting when back home on Thursday Island.

Outside his education, Manu is very handy on the football field. His code of choice is AFL, having been part of the Suns Academy and playing A-grade with the Thuringowa Bulldogs. Outside of AFL, Manu has played rugby union with Teachers West. He has shown his willingness to get in and have a go, helping with the Kup Murri during NAIDOC Day celebrations.

Manu's leadership, maturity and caring nature towards others will be sorely missed at NRL Cowboys House, and we know he will make a big impact in whatever he chooses to do.



Chasidy Pearson

A self-confessed coffee addict, Chasidy Pearson is a bright, bubbly character who doesn't hold back from showing her personality on campus. But despite her energetic personality, the Yarrabah teen, daughter of Kristen Pearson, also has a softer side showing her caring and supportive nature with a strong connection to family.

Chasidy is no stranger to leadership as the girls' boarding captain at NRL Cowboys House and house captain at her school, Calvary Christian College, and is part of the student representative council. They are roles that will serve her well for the future and support her interest in a career path as an army officer, lawyer or business owner. Having undertaken many hours of volunteer work at school, she is also well versed in public speaking, performing numerous MC roles at NRL Cowboys House events. Representing the Girls Campus, she speaks with poise and pride to welcome guests and friends to the House at important occasions.

Outside of school, Chasidy also shows sporting prowess. Netball is her main sport of choice and Chasidy competed for her school including in the premier secondary school competition, the Vicki Wilson Championship. Chasidy shows great versatility on the sporting field, also playing volleyball and rugby league for Centrals for three years.

Having built a strong foundation at the House, and taking important opportunities for leadership and volunteer roles, we have no doubt that Chasidy will succeed in whatever she puts her mind to and that she's on the right path to grow and develop as a strong young woman.



Haley Pearson

NRL Cowboys House staff are able to confirm Haley chose the right career path in construction and not automotive after putting unleaded petrol in a diesel tank! A hard-working, well-mannered teen everybody gets along with, there's no shortage of fun and laughter when Haley is around.

The Tec-NQ student from Warraber Island is kicking goals in his school-based apprenticeship with Paynters as he works quietly through his studies in civil construction. With aspirations to be a construction manager or supervisor, or even a business owner himself, Haley has earned the respect of not only House staff, but those in his workplace. He became known as the apprentice who would make his way around his worksite and shakes each person's hand at the end of each working day, a sure sign of his gratitude for opportunities made possible through his place at the House. It's no surprise he's been described as "incredibly respectful" and "mature." Haley has also racked up an impressive resume through his apprenticeship, having worked on significant projects including the Mater Hospital's five-storey carpark and the major refurbishment of Reef HQ.

Not only a superstar on the work site, Haley is also pretty handy on the sporting field having scored "the best rugby 7s try" in the finals. Haley is also involved in Townsville District Rugby League, and takes pride in his culture, assisting with the Kup Murri at NRL Cowboys House NAIDOC Day celebrations.

Haley is well respected by both students and staff at NRL Cowboys House and is very determined to achieve his goals. He has become a big brother and role model to the younger boys, particularly those from the Torres Strait Islands. His presence will be missed, but he will be farewelled knowing his ambition, strong work ethic and attitude will set him up to make the most of life's opportunities.



Kody Rogers

Mornington Island teen Kody Rogers is not afraid of hard work in his determination to find his true calling.

With the courage and bravery to change his mind, Kody first attended Ignatius Park College before studying automotive mechanics at Tec-NQ, eventually returning to traditional schooling at Heatley Secondary College in term 4, 2021.

With goals to pursue Indigenous studies and physiotherapy at university, Kody has worked hard to complete a Certificate II in workplace skills and outdoor recreation respectively, as well as a Certificate III in information, digital media and technology at school.

His current school principal has described Kody as a "wonderful role model", who is often seen helping younger students or demonstrating leadership both in and out of the classroom, becoming Melton House Captain at Heatley College, captain of Centrals U17 Rugby League Club and taking on the role of president in the NRL Cowboys House Interact Club.

Described by House staff as respectful, hard-working and funny, Kody has shown resilience and adaptability beyond his years as his plans change. His attitude is reflected in his attendance at over 90%, with his high grades just reward for his effort. Kody is sure to make his parents Georgette Reid and Lee Rogers proud, and is set to succeed in whatever he puts his mind to. Having attended NRL Cowboys House since its opening, Kody's absence will certainly be noticed, but his impact will be everlasting.



Zayryn Rosendale

Having joined NRL Cowboys House from Hope Vale in our first year of operation, Zayryn is a foundation student whose maturity and intelligence has made him a well-respected young man around the dorms. Always up for a good yarn, Zayryn is very supportive in times of need and can put a smile on the face of those who may be struggling.

A very sporty individual, Zayryn was a member of the Centrals Rugby League side for most of his junior years before needing major shoulder surgery. Despite his setbacks on the sporting field with injury, he has been able to participate in the Rugby 7s and Indigenous All Black Carnivals and plays touch rugby league socially. Through his challenges, Zayryn has matured into a caring and resilient young man who is always willing to help others through hard times.

An early starter, Zayryn has been the same height since he joined the House in year 7! He is on his way to becoming an independent, mature young man, attending Tec-NQ to become a diesel mechanic.

It's no surprise that Zayryn has become a strong leader at NRL Cowboys House with 12 siblings! Two of those are also boarding at NRL Cowboys House, with a third starting their journey in 2023, adding to the legacy Zayryn leaves. He is keen to see new people and places and will be missed at the House, but we look forward to following his progress and catching up with him when he visits his siblings.



Cordell White-Benson

Despite only joining NRL Cowboys House in his second semester of year 12, Rockhampton's Cordell White-Benson has settled in well and left his mark on the House and his fellow students.

Having grown up playing rugby league, Cordell is both respectful and respected among his peers. An independent, diligent worker, the Townsville State High student is hoping to forge a career in mining back in Rocky. Having already secured casual employment at Bunnings, Cordell has worked hard to consistently achieve in his academic pursuits and is a constant at study sessions.

With a friendly and calm demeanour, Cordell has been a great addition to the House, but keeps everyone on their toes with his mischievous exploits! Despite being as straight faced as they come, Cordell wouldn't normally just tell a 'porky pie', but when he thinks he can pull the wool over you for a laugh, his face gives nothing away.

Away from the classroom, Cordell is a keen sportsman with hopes to one day play NRL. He has racked up a list of sporting achievements, including playing for his school team at Townsville State High. He's also had the opportunity to travel to Sydney to represent Queensland Clontarf Foundation, played in the Brisbane Queensland Murri Carnival and was a winner of the Townsville U19 competition with Centrals.

As he prepares to leave for New Zealand with his family at the end of the year, we are looking forward to seeing the progress Cordell makes as he takes the next step.