

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
23 September 2010

THE PINNACLE FOUNDATION

ABOUT US

The Pinnacle Foundation has been established to provide scholarships and mentorship to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth who are marginalised or disadvantaged because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

With financial support and vocational mentoring, The Pinnacle Foundation aims to encourage achievements in higher education and training, nurturing the next generation of leaders of the LGBT community.

WHAT THE PINNACLE FOUNDATION DOES

Launched in 2009, The Pinnacle Foundation was established to assist LGBT students who are disadvantaged or marginalised because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression. Some applicants come from families who are unable to support their pursuits in higher education; others come from homes where they are not welcomed because of who they are. In today's modern world, many young LGBT people simply find themselves in a position where they don't have money and support to pursue their studies.

Through the establishment of a scholarship fund, The Pinnacle Foundation provides scholarships to help young LGBT people complete their studies at school, university, training college or vocational institution.

Additionally, The Pinnacle Foundation provides a mentoring program. Pinnacle scholars are matched with a successful professional at the pinnacle of their field. Whether it's in the arts, education, business, law, medicine, science, environment and/or government, mentors will provide Pinnacle scholars with guidance in career development and leadership.

THE PINNACLE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP

Young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who have been rejected by their families or face difficulties because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression should not face further obstacles when preparing for their future. The Pinnacle Foundation believes LGBT youth should be given every opportunity to excel and achieve their full potential.

Scholarships from The Pinnacle Foundation are provided to young LGBT people that are disadvantaged and/or marginalised but desire to undertake full-time or part-time education.

Studies must be undertaken at a public or private secondary school, or public institution of higher education in Australia. It will be for the purpose of gaining an educational or vocational qualification in any profession, trade or the arts. The grant will sit alongside and complement other government funding rather than duplicate it.

The scholarship will cover such vital needs as the cost of tuition fees or dues to an approved educational institution, a laptop, textbooks and uniforms. The scholarship is not designed to support expenses such as pocket money, travel to and from the educational establishment, or other personal expenses not directly related to their studies.

Scholarships will be granted for a period of one year. However, an existing scholarship holder is entitled to reapply for the scholarship should they comply with the goals enshrined in The Pinnacle Foundation's policies.

Importantly, payments will be made directly to educational institutions and other suppliers of goods and services.

By investing in today's LGBT youth, The Pinnacle Foundation is helping to mould the next generation of leaders in the LGBT community.

"I don't come from a background where I can get support financially so The Pinnacle Foundation scholarship has helped with a computer, software and fees, which is great. But they've also helped me out by fixing me up with a mentor who I've been able to speak with regularly. Without Pinnacle, my studies would have been much more of a challenge. Pinnacle is for anyone who needs support but also want to give back to the community as well." – **Troy Hewitt, 2010 The Pinnacle Foundation Scholar**

THE PINNACLE FOUNDATION MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

As part of its commitment to helping young LGBT people achieve their full potential, a panel of ‘vocational mentors’ – comprising successful gay and lesbian Australians who have reached the pinnacle of their profession – will offer guidance and mentoring to Pinnacle scholars. The Pinnacle Foundation strongly believes that a key factor to achieving success is having a strong base of guidance and support.

Every Pinnacle scholar will be matched with a Pinnacle mentor. All Pinnacle mentors are highly-successful individuals from the LGBT community. They are leaders in their field such as the arts, entertainment, science, law, business, government, community, information technology and other humanities. They are a sounding board for scholars and, with their professional expertise, can provide guidance and assistance with decisions relating to education and career.

“I can talk to my mentor about anything, whether it’s do with my degree, or personally or socially. With my mentor, I’ve been quite lucky that he understands my background because he has a background similar to my own. He’s been there to offer support and ideas in relation to how I should go about my studies and career.” – Troy Hewitt, 2010 The Pinnacle Foundation Scholar

Mentors also benefit from The Pinnacle Foundation’s mentorship program. With their life experience and professional expertise, mentors become role models and make a valuable contribution by helping nurture the next generation of leaders of the LGBT community.

“I think it is very important for LGBT people who have made it to leadership positions to mentor younger LGBT community members so that we can foster the next generation of leaders. It is exciting to see that attitudes to gay and lesbian people have changed significantly since I first started work but there are still pressures and difficulties which are encountered. Given that we often have feelings of being outsiders, it is important that we help our younger community members to negotiate these pressures and learn how to work within the protocols of the workplace while remaining true to themselves. In my early career I had no gay role models and, in hindsight, I would have benefited from a strong gay mentor so that I could build my confidence and know that I could be successful – it can sometimes be a very lonely place when you feel like an outsider.” – Mark Baxter, Chief Risk Officer, Wealth Management, Commonwealth Bank and mentor to Pinnacle Scholar Troy Hewitt

THE PINNACLE FOUNDATION TEAM

PATRON

The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG

Michael Kirby was Australia's longest-serving judge before his retirement from the High Court in February 2009. He is a strong advocate of human rights, particularly in relation to young people, sexual minorities and women.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Susan Brooks

Susan has extensive experience in managing regulatory risks and consumer issues from within executive government, statutory administrative bodies (Australian Broadcasting Tribunal and Australian Securities Commission), and the financial services sector (Chief Compliance Officer, Westpac and the Australian Banking Industry Ombudsman). She is currently a member of the ABC's Independent Complaints Review Panel.

Simone Bartley

Simone Bartley has spent the last 20 years in communications across Australia, Asia, UK & Europe, running global network agency Saatchi & Saatchi for eight of those years. She is a board member of Asia Pacific Business Coalition/HIV, and Communication's advisor for UNIFEM White Ribbon and Reconciliation Australia. In 2007 Simone featured in the UNIFEM 50 Most Powerful Women exhibition.

Gail Whiteford

Professor Gail Whiteford is the Pro Vice Chancellor - Social Inclusion at Macquarie University. In the last three years, Gail has been an international facilitator on two European Commission-funded social inclusion projects – one in Turkey and one in Bulgaria – focusing on enhancing educational and occupational participation. Gail joined Macquarie from Charles Sturt University where, as well as being Professor and Chair of Occupational Therapy, she has held various roles including Strategic Research Centre Director, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research, Convenor of the Women in Research Forum, and Head of the Albury-Wodonga campus.

John Taberner

John Taberner is a lawyer who specialises in all aspects of environmental law, in particular planning and pollution-control law. He is a Director of Annual Report Awards Inc, which established Australia's only award for excellence in environment reporting. John also served for four years as secretary of the National Environmental Law Association of Australia.

Justice Elizabeth Fullerton

Elizabeth is a NSW Supreme Court Judge. Originally trained as a primary and infants teacher at Coburg Teachers' College, Elizabeth taught kindergarten and primary schoolers in 1975 and 1976 at Port Melbourne Primary School. In 1978 she commenced an Arts/Law degree at Monash University, and completed her degree at the University of New South Wales in the early 80s. Elizabeth has served as an adviser to a number of charities and public organisations, was a director of the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Board, and chaired the Mardi Gras Festival committees.

Philip Comans

With over ten years experience, Philip Comans is a leading real estate professional. He manages his own real estate firm Grand Pacific Real Estate specialising in premium coastal homes on the eastern seaboard. Real estate is but one of many careers in Philip's diverse professional life. In the past, he has worked as a retail buyer for global companies like Woolworths and BP Petroleum; as an event management consultant for boutique firm Bridges & Associates; and as a freelance photographer with publications like *Capital Q* and *Blue*. Philip was also the official photographer during several Mardi Gras parades and parties. It was through photography that led Philip to his current career in real estate, after he joined a real estate firm that had commissioned him.

Sean Linkson

Sean Linkson has over twenty five years experience as a human resources professional. A partner with the Executive Search firm, Talent Partners, his experience covers a wide range of areas such as financial services retail, healthcare, consumer goods, information technology and government. Prior to joining Talent Partners in 2005, Sean was Managing Director of A.T. Kearney Executive Search, Australia/NZ and Regional Leader for their Global Financial Institutions Group. He was with the firm for over 8 years. He commenced his HR career with Australia's largest human capital company, Morgan and Banks, where he headed up the banking and finance team. Sean earned his Bachelor of Applied Science at Queensland Institute of Technology, and has a Master of Commerce majoring in Finance from the University of New South Wales. His not-for-profit involvement includes co-founding of The Pinnacle Foundation and he is also on the NSW Development Board of The Hunger Project.