



AIS ATHLETE EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Athlete Testimonials



The AIS Athlete Education Scholarship Program commenced as a pilot in 2020 to provide financial support to Australian high performance athletes who are committing themselves to pursuing education opportunities during their sporting careers.

The program provided scholarships to 40 athletes across 19 different sports and attending 19 different educational institutions. The scholarship recipients comprised Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games athletes, including 23 women athletes.

The role of the JMWF

The JMWF provided a \$100,000 donation, fund scholarships for the pilot program and helping athletes to balance their sporting careers and study. AIS Director People Development & Wellbeing, Matti Clements says: “The AIS has a strong focus on helping athletes thrive in all areas of their lives, and this scholarship program has helped athletes achieve their goals, on and off the field.”

“The combination of sport and study is a winning mix. Pursuing a passion away from sport can help provide athletes with a more well-rounded perspective, and ensure that they have more balance in their lives. The AIS has a strong focus on helping athletes thrive in all areas of their lives, and this scholarship has helped athletes achieve their goals, on and off the field.”

Matti Clements

AIS Director

People Development & Wellbeing

DYLAN LITTLEHALES

PARA-CANOE

2016 Paralympian

“This grant has allowed me to pay off some of my student debts for my **Bachelor of Psychological Science at Newcastle University**, while still focusing on the Tokyo Paralympics.

This scholarship is very important for athletes as it reduces the financial burden of studying while training in a high-performance environment. This allows us to setup a life after sport while still pursuing our short-term goals in sport.”



Photo courtesy of Steve McArthur, Parra Paddle

RUBY ROSEMAN-GANNON

CYCLING

"I used my scholarship for my **Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Melbourne**. This scholarship means a lot as it is not always easy balancing sport and academic pursuits, especially when there is financial pressure.

I am super motivated to take cycling as far as I can in the immediate future, but I am equally motivated to pursue a post-sport career in the neuroscience field and hopefully give back to the community. I love widening my awareness and knowledge beyond the sporting world and hope I can be a role model for future athletes considering partaking in educational pursuits.

I am so grateful for the support from the AIS Education Scholarship, AusCycling and the University of Melbourne, all of which recognise the importance of continued academic engagement in elite athletes."



Photo courtesy of AusCycling

BEN COOMBS

ROWING

“Thank you for awarding me the AIS Education Scholarship for 2020. I was able to use the funds to pay off a portion of my **Juris Doctor degree [post graduate Law] at the Australian National University** and therefore lessen the debt that I will incur in post athlete life.

Higher education is extremely important to me as it provides balance in my life and will allow me to have a career post elite sport. It is humbling to be recognised by the Australian Institute of Sport for this scholarship and I feel it is great recognition for the effort that does come with balancing education with elite sport.

The Law School at ANU has been very flexible and accommodating of my sporting commitments: assignments have been adjusted and professors have been very understanding and accommodating of my situation. The benefit of this support is that I have been able to complete tasks as they fit in with my rowing, and as such my academic output has increased and improved.”



Photo courtesy of Rowing Australia

ELISE KELLOND-KNIGHT

FOOTBALL

"I used the AIS education grant to pay-off some of the fees for my **Masters of Business Administration at Griffith University**. I undertook three courses in 2020 which cost a total of \$13,500, so it was extremely helpful to receive this grant from the AIS. I have found it so challenging to find financial support to assist in undertaking an MBA - in fact, this reason had prevented me from enrolling until I suffered a serious long-term injury in July 2020.

Without funding, I decided to enrol into University to give myself a goal away from sport and to protect my mental health. If weren't for my injury - it is likely I would still be looking for adequate financial support to undertake the MBA. Since enrolment, I have worked with Griffith Sports College to change policies to allow my MBA to be supported through the scholarship system.

The outcome of this is basically what I had been searching for at the end of 2019 when I decided I wanted to undertake further study. Through my search for funding, I was also able to link with Torrens University, who will now offer full scholarships to Australian footballers. This will hopefully prevent any other professional footballers having to go through the ordeal I experienced, when searching for adequate study assistance."

Photo courtesy of Football Australia

ALEXANDRA MARTIN-WALLACE

CYCLING

"I used the scholarship as part of my **Engineering Degree at University of Queensland**.

This scholarship supports my career development by reducing my university financial load. I am lucky to have good support from my university, both from the specific athlete support staff and teaching staff.

They are flexible to allow for my training and racing schedule. AusCycling is also very supportive of my study and helps me balance my training and study load."

Photo courtesy of AusCycling



CLARE POLKINGHORNE

FOOTBALL

Studying a Master of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Griffith University

“Obviously, there will come a time when I retire from football and I need to be prepared for that time and this gives me many options post-football to continue with another career. I do think that having something other than football to focus on, actually helps me as a footballer. Study provides a different outlet for me, something else to focus on and recharges the batteries so I’m not constantly thinking about football. I’ve always enjoyed learning and I do think it provides a good balance to my life.



Photo courtesy of Football Australia

OLYMPIA ALDERSEY

ROWING

Double Degree in Law and Health Science at University of Adelaide

“This scholarship has helped me maintain my university commitments along with my sporting ones. It has made it possible to use my hard-earned money in other areas such as training equipment, transport costs and medical costs. I am truly grateful; it is a great endorsement to promote study and endorse a balanced lifestyle with sport and to work. I enjoy working towards my future after sport.”



Photo courtesy of Rowing Australia

JAIME RYAN

SAILING

“The AIS scholarship has contributed towards my study of a **Masters of Environment [Sustainable Business major] at Griffith University**. This extra support gives me the opportunity to better balance my education with my ongoing training and competition requirements, particularly in the lead up to the Olympic Games in Tokyo.

I really value the opportunity to study as an athlete, as I believe it will really help my transition to life beyond sailing when that time comes. I am grateful for the support offered by the AIS and would encourage other athletes to utilise the support available to them also.”



Photo courtesy of Sailing Australia

CAITLIN PARKER

BOXING

2018 Commonwealth Games silver medallist

“Straight after qualifying for the Tokyo Olympic Games in boxing I went into lockdown, the Olympics were postponed and I was stuck at home. I felt lost and with little purpose or motivation.

I decided to look towards my future career and study in a **Diploma of Sport Coaching and Development at La Trobe University.**

The AIS Education Scholarship not only assisted me with the costs of this course but also helped me balance training and study. I now feel that I have the support to better my education while preparing for the Tokyo Olympics – without one negatively impacting the other.”



Photo courtesy of Boxing Australia

LAKEISHA PATTERSON

PARA-SWIMMING

“I was fortunate enough to receive the AIS Education Scholarship 2020, to ease the financial burden attributed to my Semester 1, 2020 courses in **Bachelor of Communication (Major Digital Media) at the University of Queensland**. Due to COVID-19, my sporting goals were put on hold. However, I used that time to focus more on my study with a full-time workload to accelerate my course of study.

This was a blessing in disguise as I was unable to attend public-speaking events or functions, which is my main source of income, during high-training loads, as I prepare for international competitions. With all that stripped away this year, the scholarship was greatly beneficial, allowing me to achieve high academic success.”



Photo courtesy of Swimming Australia

NIKITA HAINS

DIVING

“The AIS scholarship I was awarded went towards my study in a **Bachelor of Biomedical Science at the University of Adelaide**. This year has been extremely challenging for all, so having the financial support to follow my endeavours away from the pool was especially useful.

Education is something that has always been paramount to me. My passion for sport and my goal of being an Olympian is just as important as my dream to become a doctor. Although these goals are realistic, they prove to be very demanding both physically and mentally. The AIS and this scholarship have generously helped support me in my pursuit of these goals.”

Photo courtesy of Diving Australia



KELSEY GRIFFIN

BASKETBALL

“While competing, I undertook completing my **Master of Teaching (secondary) at La Trobe University** to prepare for life after sport. While it was difficult balancing life, sport, and school, it is scholarships like this that help me to achieve both on and off the court. It was with the combined effort of La Trobe’s Elite Athlete Program and support from the AIS that I was able to not have to sacrifice one for the other. Thank you so much for all the help that was given to me throughout my masters.”



Photo courtesy of Basketball Australia

MATT LEVY**PARA-SWIMMING**

“For me, I guess, the postponement of the 2020 Paralympics was a bit of a silver lining. I was able to finish my **MBA Leadership and Innovation at University of Canberra**, and so for me it was an easy goal to readjust to.

I’ve been lucky enough to hold down a job for about 11, plus my swimming career. I wouldn’t have been able to do that if I didn’t have the mindset of trying to showcase what I am capable of – you can do anything you put your mind to. It’s about trying new things and something you really enjoy. It doesn’t need to be University or TAFE, just something you can learn from.

It’s great to have that balance, not just that singular focus on sport. It’s been able to help improve me as an athlete and a corporate worker.”

Photo courtesy of Swimming Australia



PAUL BURNETT

VOLLEYBALL

“I used the scholarship for paying-off part of my **Bachelor of Dental Surgery Course that I undertook at The University of Adelaide**. I graduated in December 2020. This scholarship significantly helped with alleviating some of the financial stress that has come from five years of full-time study.

The support from Volleyball Australia, the coaching staff and fellow players over the years has been invaluable in terms of allowing and encouraging me to follow both my passions of beach volleyball and dentistry. However, like many national sporting programs there are limits to how much financial support they can provide, and this is why receiving the AIS Education Scholarship was so impactful, and I am very grateful.”



Photo courtesy of Volleyball Australia

JESSE AUNGLES

PARA-SWIMMING

"I'm studying **International Relations at the University of Canberra**. I've been so lucky to be able to represent Australia as a swimmer and I'd love to continue representing Australia in a different role when my sporting career is over, that's why I chose International Relations.

I feel like a lot of the skills we learn as athletes can be transferrable to life outside sport too. There's no understating that there's been a lot of challenges in 2020, but I think those challenges bring a huge opportunity to grow. You don't grow in a box."



Photo courtesy of Swimming Australia

REBA STEWART

TAEKWONDO

"I used my scholarship for my **double degree of Bachelor of Psychological Science/ Exercise and Sports Science at Australian Catholic University**. This scholarship has supported me with my finances and to pay-off my HECS/HELP for this semester, giving me the opportunity to use my other funds to support my sport and health. It has allowed me to work less and increase my training load and study load.

This sport is my passion, and this scholarship has allowed me to stress less and focus on my training and improvement, increasing my performance. It has also helped me focus on passing my subjects at University and receiving good marks.

My University has been very helpful in letting me move some subjects around to fit in with my strict training schedule for Taekwondo. The AIS Combat Centre and Australian Taekwondo supported me through my injury providing the necessary rehabilitation with physio, doctors and strength and conditioning coaches, and helping me fund the tests I needed to get in order to return to full training."

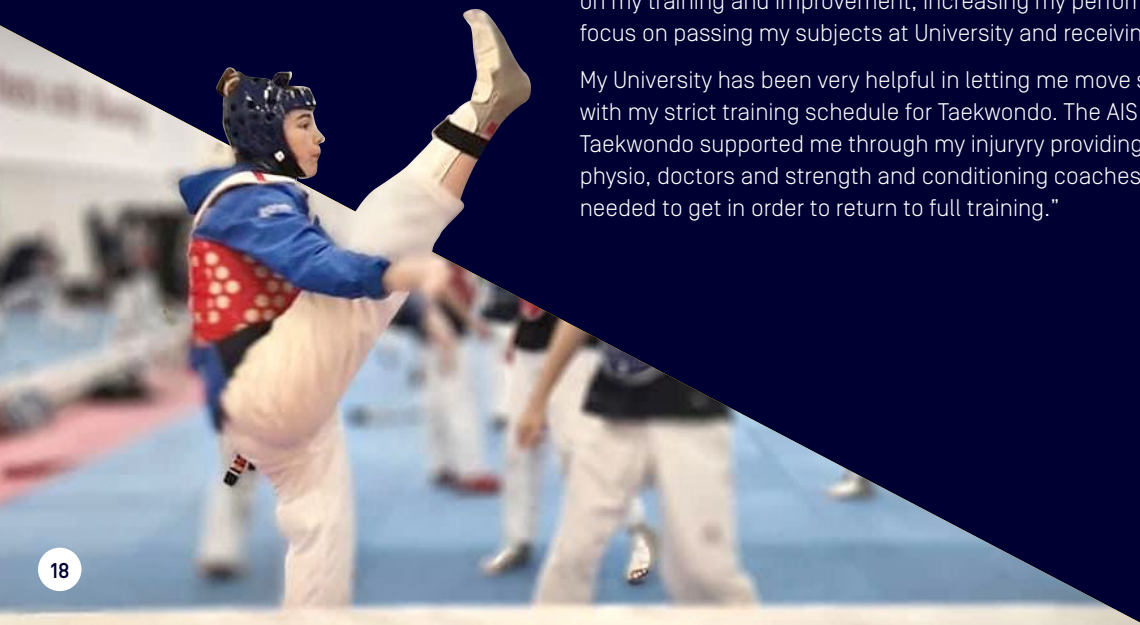


Photo courtesy of Australian Taekwondo

PHOEBE BELL

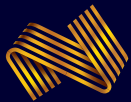
VOLLEYBALL

“I have used this scholarship to complete three subjects in 2020 in my **Bachelor of Business [Marketing] course at the University of South Australia**. The scholarship has taken financial stress off me, allowing me to focus more attention on my training rather than work.

The University of South Australia have been excellent at offering support and understanding the demands of a full-time athlete. I receive regular phone calls from UniSA Online ensuring that I am on track with my studies. My coaches also are understanding and adaptable with training times and load around exam periods.”

Photo courtesy of Volleyball Australia





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