



Chief Executive Women

Women leaders enabling women leaders

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Chief Executive Women announces winners - 2020 CEW & Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation Scholarships**

Chief Executive Women (CEW) recognises National Reconciliation Week by today announcing **Dr Michelle Dickson, Dr Leanne Holt, and Kristy Masella** as the winners of the 2020 CEW Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation Scholarships.

The three scholarships, which are offered to mid-level and senior women managers who are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage, will enable the winners to attend executive education programs at Harvard Kennedy School, Boston, Massachusetts.

Announcing the winners, CEW Scholarships Committee Acting Chair, Deidre Willmott, says "Our experience is that the CEW Scholarships Program provides the scholars with greater capability, credibility and confidence. These scholarships will benefit the winners as individuals and the lives of other Indigenous women through the new skills they bring back to their roles. This outcome will help shape Australia's collective journey towards a more just, equitable and reconciled nation".

Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of New South Wales, says, "One evening in the early 1990s, I went to a function in Woollahroo, Sydney, hosted by Roberta Sykes, to celebrate the award of a scholarship to Larissa Behrendt to travel to Harvard to undertake a Master of Laws, the first Indigenous Australian lawyer to study at Harvard. I knew neither Larissa nor Roberta Sykes. Indeed, I knew no-one at the function. However, one aspect of that evening has always stayed with me. Roberta Sykes announced that she intended to establish a scholarship foundation. A deeply strategic and inspirational concept. As they say, 'the rest is history'.

I am therefore honoured to extend my warmest congratulations to this year's winners of the CEW & Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation Scholarships. As we mark the start of National Reconciliation Week today, you continue in the tradition of dedication and leadership of earlier scholarship winners, inspiring the next generation of Indigenous students, leaders and thinkers. I wish you every success in your endeavours."

Richard Potok, Executive Director of the Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation and CEO of the Aurora Education Foundation, says: "We are delighted to partner with CEW to provide talented Indigenous women with the opportunity to further develop their leadership skills, enrich their experiences, advance their careers and deliver benefits to their communities".

## **The Winners**

**Dr Michelle Dickson**, a Darkinjung/ Ngarigo woman from New South Wales, is a Senior Lecturer and Academic Program Director in Indigenous Public Health at the University of Sydney.

“Leadership is about leveraging networks and communication strategies to create responsive, values-led change. I look forward to exploring how I can contribute more to the learning opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and support further understanding and valuing of First Nation’s health and wellbeing”, says Michelle.

**Dr Leanne Holt** is Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Strategy at Macquarie University. She has over twenty years’ experience working in Aboriginal education and is a Worimi and Biripai woman from the mid north coast of New South Wales.

“This scholarship will strengthen my abilities to develop and implement achievable tertiary education strategies for Indigenous people and their communities, especially given the recent pressures on universities due to COVID-19”, says Leanne.

**Kristy Masella** is the CEO of AES, a national Indigenous recruitment and group training company. She is a Murri woman from Rockhampton and has worked in Aboriginal affairs for more than 25 years across portfolios in New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Kristy says the scholarship will help her address the challenges that she faces daily. “Working with government and other stakeholders is becoming increasingly complex. I want to build my effectiveness as a leader and a manager and to continue improving the lives of Aboriginal people across the country”, says Kristy.

## **The Scholarships**

The CEW & Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation Scholarships form part of the annual CEW Scholarships Program, which in 2019 provided 20 talented Australian women with the opportunity to take their careers to the next level by supporting executive education at internationally acclaimed business schools.

***For more information, contact Susan Metcalf: 0491 217 564 or [media@cew.org.au](mailto:media@cew.org.au)***

**ENDS**

### **About Chief Executive Women**

Chief Executive Women is the pre-eminent organisation representing more than 650 of Australia's most senior women from the corporate, public, academic and not-for-profit sectors. Its mission is "women leaders enabling women leaders". Through advocacy, targeted programs and scholarships, CEW works to remove the barriers to women's progression and ensure equal opportunity for prosperity. [www.cew.org.au](http://www.cew.org.au)

### **About Award Partner: Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation**

In 1983, Roberta Sykes became the first black Australian to graduate from an American university with a PhD in Education from Harvard. She returned to Australia to take up the reins of Black Women's Action in Education, the group that had raised the funds to enable her to attend Harvard. Over the next 15 years, under Roberta's stewardship, Black Women's Action in Education continued to encourage and support Indigenous students to study in Australia and overseas, before being renamed in Roberta's honour in 2008. The Foundation was the first to offer overseas postgraduate scholarships to Indigenous Australians. Roberta died in 2010, but the Foundation has continued her amazing legacy and has supported over 45 Indigenous students in their pursuit of academic achievement. [www.robertasykesfoundation.com](http://www.robertasykesfoundation.com)

### **About CEW Scholarships**

The CEW Scholarships Program enables women leaders by supporting them at critical junctures in their careers, from their first management roles to top executive positions. More than 200 women have been awarded scholarships to business schools in Australia and internationally since CEW commenced its executive program for women leaders in 1992. [www.cew.org.au/scholarships](http://www.cew.org.au/scholarships)

**CEW Scholarships program is funded** through the CEW Annual Dinner and the generosity of sponsors including: **PLATINUM SPONSOR:** KING & WOOD MALLESONS. **OFFICIAL AIRLINE SPONSOR:** QANTAS. **PREMISES PARTNER:** CBRE. **GOLD SPONSORS:** ANZ, BHP, KPMG, NAB, QBE, TELSTRA. **SILVER SPONSORS:** ALLENS LINKLATERS, AMP, ASHURST, BCG, BROADSPECTRUM, COMMONWEALTH BANK, DELOITTE, ENDEAVOUR DRINKS, EGON ZEHNDER, EY, GILBERT + TOBIN, GPT GROUP, HARVEY NORMAN, HEIDRICK & STRUGGLES, IAG, JP MORGAN, LENDLEASE, MACQUARIE GROUP, MICROSOFT, MIRVAC, RUSSELL REYNOLDS ASSOCIATES, SPENCER STUART, SUNCORP, SYDNEY AIRPORT, WESFARMERS, WESTPAC GROUP.