RATEP provided Laurel Henaway with many life-changing experiences. As a result she has the job she always wanted: working as a Year 4 teacher in her community at Bowen State Primary School.

Why did you choose to get involved in RATEP?
I chose to get involved in RATEP because I liked how it was a community-based teacher education program that accommodated Indigenous people who were unable to leave their family obligations, but wanted to gain a career in education.

How did higher education change your life?
Completing a Bachelor of Education is like a ticket to a good life, financially. It is also a ticket to making a difference in my community, as a role model to other Indigenous people. It has given me the confidence to encourage and support other Indigenous people studying in higher education.

What were some of the positive aspects about studying through RATEP?
The positive aspects of studying through RATEP is that it allows you to study in your own community without leaving your family. You also receive additional support from a Department of Education and Training teacher coordinator at each site and support from other RATEP students from different communities. Most importantly, you receive support from your family and friends. There is also assistance from the RATEP support officer from James Cook University to help with the resources needed for each subject, as well as with professional experience in local communities.

What have you enjoyed most about the program?
I have enjoyed meeting other Indigenous people during the journey. Also, I enjoyed visiting other Indigenous remote schools and seeing how they catered and accommodated to the learning styles of the Indigenous students in their community. This was a life-changing experience and eye-opening culturally in how English was taught as a second language.

What advice would you give to those thinking about it?
RATEP is a successful program that will help you to become a qualified registered teacher in your community. If you are thinking about enrolling through RATEP to gain a career in education then I advise you to never give up on what you really want to do or be and enrol in this successful program as it is not too late.

What have been the high points in your career?
One of the high points in my career so far is gaining full-time employment in my local community and teaching the year level I always wanted. Also, I now have my oldest daughter enrolled in RATEP and she informs people that if mum could achieve her goal while raising a family, so can she (who has no responsibilities).

Finally, this quote, given to me by my late father, helped me through my studies: ‘What you want won’t always come easy, but if you work hard and don’t give up you will get there.’

“What you want won’t always come easy, but if you work hard and don’t give up you will get there”