A YOUNG Weipa woman has graduated with a teaching degree she was able to complete at home through an award-winning remote area education program.

Rebecca Namok, a Torres Strait Islander, graduated with a Bachelor of Education degree from James Cook University (JCU), and under the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP), she was able to start her degree studies while still at high school.

Ms Namok completed a Certificate III and a Certificate IV in Education (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) while in her senior years at Western Cape College, Weipa, as part of RATEP, a community-based teacher education pathway for Indigenous people.

The award-winning program is offered as a partnership between JCU, the Queensland Department of Education and Training and Tropical North Queensland TAFE. It enables Indigenous people to remain in their community while completing the requirements of the Bachelor of Education at a RATEP site or at the Thursday Island campus.

‘Positive feeling’

Ms Namok said she liked teaching because it was helping to shape the future.

“What I like about teaching is the positive feeling that, as an educator, you play a major role in educating students who are citizens of the future,” she said.

“When I first started I didn’t really want to be a teacher. As I continued my studies and gained more experience and passion for teaching, I realised that is all I wanted to be, to challenge myself, have high expectations, make changes and mostly to improve and help be a part of closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.”

Since graduating from high school, Ms Namok has completed a Diploma of Education (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) through Tropical North Queensland TAFE and then continued on to the Bachelor of Education at JCU while living in her home community of Napranum.

RATEP, which has a study centre at Weipa and 16 other locations across Queensland, provided her with academic support and access to the information technologies needed to complete her studies.

JCU RATEP director Helen McDonald said Ms Namok was the first in her family to gain a university degree, and her achievement would ensure she was a role model to her family and her community.

Ms Namok hopes to teach Years 1 to 3 at Western Cape College.

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