An aboriginal youth arrived in Sydney a few weeks ago to train as Australia's first aboriginal pilot.

He is Bill Bennell, 19, of Boddington, near Perth. He had not been in a plane until a month ago.

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots' Association awarded Bennell their first Dr. Mervyn Hall Memorial Aboriginal Flying Scholarship.

The Association established the scholarship in memory of a founder officer.

Thirty aborigines from all over Australia applied for the scholarship.

Bennell will train for a commercial pilot's licence.

On arrival in Sydney Bennell said:

"When I read about the scholarship in the Perth papers I didn't even think of applying.

"I'd never even been in a plane.

"But I used to watch the planes fly over the factory where I worked as an apprentice cooper making barrels.

"My boss nagged me into applying.

"I did three aptitude tests in a Chipmunk last month and they almost had to drag me out of the cockpit."

"It was terrific.

"All the dark people in Perth came down to see me off.

Their Hero

"They said I was their hero.

"I am determined to make a success of this for their sake.

"I want to prove that aborigines can tackle any job if they're given a chance.

"I was so excited on the flight to Sydney that I couldn't sleep at all.

"The pilot took me up to the cockpit to see how things worked.

"Now I can't wait to get at the controls of a plane myself."

Bennell will live with the secretary of the Association (Mr. Noel Fortune) while training for 12 months.

Bennell was met on his arrival in Sydney by the president and the secretary of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots' Association, Mr. B. Miles and Mr. N. Fortune.

If he gains a commercial pilot's licence, he will go to Queensland on air-taxi work.