

## A message of indigenous hope

### *Education sets up a virtuous cycle for remote communities*

The word indigenous often is paired with crisis rather than celebration. All the more reason for the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation to mark its 10th anniversary with some razzamatazz last night at Sydney's Luna Park. It's a success story, a serious response to the indigenous education crisis. The foundation offers not only scholarships to school and university but also mentoring to ease the passage to further study or a job. It has raised more than \$164 million since 2008 and the pay-off includes a 94 per cent Year 12 completion rate, compared with the general indigenous figure of 62.4 per cent, and a successful post-school transition for 95 per cent of the program's alumni. Some 500 scholars are supported by the foundation, along with a similar number of graduates.

It is a low-cost, not-for-profit agency run with business acumen. It boasts an impressive board chaired by Warren Mundine and patrons include David Gonski, while corporate backers range from Qantas to BHP and this newspaper. The foundation works with 32 carefully chosen schools across the country and draws its scholars from more than 200 communities, many

remote. The path to success often involves the wrench of young people being sent away as boarders but the hope, where possible, is they will return enriched and enriching, setting up a virtuous cycle. In this way communities are empowered and the tyranny of low expectations is undermined.

Yesterday we reported the story of sisters Adimin and Cassandra Mooka, who successfully completed school in Toowoomba, Queensland, and returned home to work on Dauan Island in Torres Strait. They are not the first in their family to leave in pursuit of education and Adimin can be confident the option of education beyond primary level will be available to her daughter, Bawanab, now one year old.

*The Australian* publishes sometimes bleak reports from indigenous communities. There is little hope of solutions if nobody will face squarely the nature and extent of problems, and it's important to bear witness to the human suffering involved. But it is also vital to spread news of achievement — especially incremental improvements of the kind likely to prove scalable and sustainable — lest we succumb to the paralysis of defeatism.