



**THE HON PETER GARRETT MP**  
Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **\$40 million to help indigenous youth achieve in school**

More than 2000 indigenous youth from across the country will share the benefits of the Gillard Government's funding of \$20 million to the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) which is helping students enrol at boarding schools and supporting them as they transition to university or work.

The funding provided by the Government has been matched by \$20 million which the AIEF has raised through corporate and private donations since 2009, School Education Minister Peter Garrett said.

Mr Garrett said the Australian Government pledged its support in 2009 to help the Foundation leverage matching corporate and private donations. The Foundation's target was \$5 million in the first five years and \$20 million over 20 years so it has raised its full corporate and private investment 17 years ahead of time.

"The foundation has managed to raise this significant sum of money in an incredibly short space of time, which is a tribute to the staff and supporters of the foundation and the many people and organisations that put their hand in their pockets to help out," he said.

"As a result, the AIEF will be able to help hundreds more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders attend great schools, get the best education possible, and then move into further tertiary education or a job at a leading Australian company.

"Education is the best passport out of poverty. It's particularly vital that we focus on making sure our indigenous kids stay in school and equip themselves with the skills and education needed to be able to hold down a job and contribute to their communities."

Since the Foundation was formed in 2007 it has helped 240 indigenous youth attend boarding schools in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. Most of those students are still progressing through school but already, 50 students on AIEF scholarships have completed Year 12, with 23 having gone on to study at university and 18 in apprenticeships or other employment.

The AIEF is working with the other students to develop and implement career transition strategies to ensure all students are productively engaged after they finish Year 12. AIEF has also provided university scholarships for 32 indigenous students, studying degrees as diverse as medicine, law, commerce, engineering and science, with a success rate of 94%.

The students who receive AIEF boarding school scholarships have a Year 12 retention rate of 88 per cent, compared to the national year 12 retention rate for all indigenous students of just 47 per cent in 2010 and the national average of 79 per cent for all Australian students.

“The unambiguous success of the program has proven it works and this is what drives us to passionately continue this work with all the energy and support we can muster,” AIEF CEO Andrew Penfold said.

“In 2009, we signed a contract with the Australian Government in which we said we would use our best endeavours to raise \$20 million over 20 years to match the Government funding.

“We took this commitment extremely seriously which is why we are proud to have raised the full \$20 million in just two and half years.

“There is a strong and growing interest from indigenous families and communities, boarding schools and university colleges who want to participate and we are grateful for the support of the Australian Government and our other partners which is allowing us to help more and more kids.

“Our success in attracting investment in this work will help us continue to expand the work of the Foundation in order to help more Indigenous children have the opportunity to succeed and the future they dream of. I am hopeful that seeing the results of this money in action, creating positive, proven and long-lasting change in indigenous communities, will encourage corporate Australia and all Australians to continue their support of the work of AIEF.”

Mr Garrett said the Gillard Government was committed to halving the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous education results. This includes \$30 million in funding for Focus Schools, targeted assistance under the Smarter Schools National Partnerships, hiring 200 extra teachers in the Northern Territory and investing more in early childhood education in indigenous communities.

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