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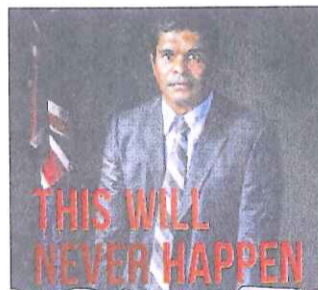
Avea Sabatino, left, and her sister Siale left their home on Thursday Island to study at Presbyterian Ladies College, in Sydney's Croydon, on an indigenous scholarship

Funds secure lifetime of opportunity

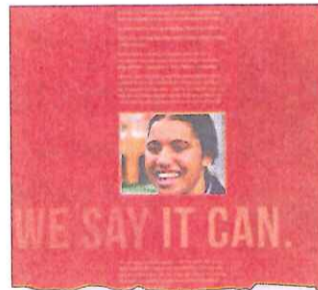
PATRICIA KARVELAS
JUSTINE FERRARI

THE Sabatino children have been afforded the kind of opportunity their parents never had — a chance to create their destiny through education.

While their parents work in the West Australian mines, Avea, 16, and her sister Siale, 11, attend boarding school in Sydney and their 13-year-old brother, Kemaea, boards at school in Perth — all supported by scholarships provided by the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation.



Ads promoting the AIEF cause in *The Australian* today



With the Gillard government set to announce today a \$22 million funding boost for indigenous education, an additional 700-odd

indigenous students will get the same chance to excel as the Sabatinos.

"Both my parents would have

loved to have gone to university," Avea said. "I was given this opportunity and now I can fulfil that dream."

"Regardless of where I went to school I would have still wanted to go to university but coming to PLC has opened up so many more opportunities."

Today's announcement follows a strong campaign — backed by advertisements in *The Australian* — by AIEF chief executive and founder Andrew Penfold, who has been lobbying to raise a further

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Funding boost gives indigenous kids a chance to learn

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\$100m to allow another 7000 indigenous students to be offered the chance of a boarding school place. While the government's investment is short of his ambition, it will improve the chances of many indigenous children.

"This \$10 million from government is welcome and a good start, but we still have a



long way to go before we reach \$140 million," Mr Penfold said last night.

"School leaders and school communities can see there's strong support from the community to engage and make a difference, and it also makes them think of other ways to support these students."

"Not all students want to go to boarding school away from

home. Schools around the country not able to have boarders are looking at other ways to be involved in this journey and play a role."

From the Umai clan on Thursday Island, the Sabatinos moved to the mainland when Avea finished Year 6, settling in Cairns for about four years.

When Avea reached year 10, she was sent to PLC Sydney in Sydney's inner west with the support of the AIEF. Siale joined Avea at PLC this year while their brother boards at Aquinas College in Perth.

School Education Minister Peter Garrett will today

announce the federal government will provide an additional \$10m to the foundation this year, and \$12m under the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program over the next four years as part of Tuesday's budget.

Mr Garrett said the extra funding for the AIEF would help support another 733 indigenous students to attend boarding school, in addition to the 2000 who have so far benefited from the \$44m worth of scholarships funded by the scheme. He said the funding boost meant that since 2008, Labor had delivered \$32m to the foundation.