

INDIGENOUS

Demand for scholarship soars

THE founder of the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation says he cannot keep up with the tremendous demand from families who want their children sent to top boarding schools.

Chief executive Andrew Penfold told the Sky News *Australian Agenda* program his "biggest disappointment" was not having the resources to match the hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders around the country.

"So we are now seeking to raise another \$100 million so that we can lift our target from 2000 kids to 7000 kids at the best schools in the country," Mr Penfold said.

Since it kicked off in 2008, the AIEF has raised more than \$40m

in a joint venture with the government and the private sector, providing more than 400 indigenous children with scholarships to 34 of the nation's top schools.

Of those students, 90 per cent finished Year 12, compared with a national completion rate of just over 50 per cent. Of AIEF high school graduates, 92 per cent go on to university, a traineeship or a career.

At the weekend, the Gillard government said it would provide a fresh \$10m to the AIEF this year, as well as \$12m over four years in tomorrow's budget.

Mr Penfold welcomed the funding boost but said there was still "a long way to go".

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