

## THE AUSTRALIAN

THE HEART OF THE NATION

### Fostering great expectations

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*The AIEF is helping Aboriginal students beat disadvantage*

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A SCHOLARSHIP can change a life, especially if the recipient grasps the opportunity to work hard and excel. That is why the 93 per cent of students supported by the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation who finished Year 12 last year deserve to feel very proud. Members of this outstanding cohort are now engaged in work, study and other pursuits.

No government-run indigenous program has been as effective as the AIEF, which *The Australian* has championed since 2011. Nor has any government-run program been as efficient.

The foundation, funded by private investment and government, spends just 2.4 per cent of its scholarship funds on running costs. It reflects the value of

private sector philanthropy and the not-for-profit sector in closing the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Rather than seeking out academic high-flyers or sports stars, as with some scholarship schemes, the AIEF responds to student demand. Last year, the number of students with AIEF scholarships to some of Australia's best schools rose by 43 per cent to 421. Happily, the increase reflected the rising aspirations of young Aborigines.

Eighteen-year-old Cairns woman Mikasa Donald, a Torres Strait Islander who graduated from Sydney's Pymble Ladies' College last year, is preparing to study nursing. In her words, the foundation is "making an impact more than statistics can explain".