

Young hopefuls take dreams to the capital



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As a young indigenous student who hopes to leave her mark on the nation, there are few better opportunities than learning from the man dubbed “the father of reconciliation”, senator Pat Dodson.

At 16, Madison Lampton is one of 14 Australian Indigenous Education Foundation scholarship recipients among the 52-strong delegation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Canberra this week for the Work Experience in Government program. The WEX program, which offers information about careers in government, is run by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in partnership with AIEF, and AIEF scholarship students have taken part since 2010.

Yesterday, students had lunch with Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion.

Madison, in Year 11 at St Catherine’s School in Waverley in Sydney’s east and from the NSW central west town of Portland, plans to study physiotherapy at university. She is keen to learn how she can use her skills to make a difference, particularly in income inequality, homelessness, health and indigenous affairs.

“This is my fourth year on the AIEF scholarship and it has been great ... The first couple of months were very tough because I missed family and home, but after that it got a lot easier. I made new friends and settled in at school,” she said.

AIEF scholarships enable indigenous students to enrol at some of the nation’s leading schools, and through the Pathways Program provides mentoring and career support to students and graduates indefi-



KYM SMITH

Madison Lampton

nately, with a focus on supporting them as they move into university and fulfilling careers.

Madison has embraced every opportunity in the classroom and on the sports field at St Catherine’s, and her trailblazing has rubbed off on five younger siblings: “I think it has empowered them to be better because coming from a small community, you don’t really get that many opportunities.”

AIEF executive director Andrew Penfold said the program was “like everything we do — we are trying to open the eyes of the students to think big, and dream big and understand the world out there is very welcoming for them”.

“What we try to do with all the students is create opportunities for them to lift their horizons and their aspirations by seeing what’s out there and what’s possible.”

He said the students also gave back, sharing their culture and backgrounds: “The politicians are seeing first-hand there is a whole generation of motivated and interested indigenous kids coming through the ranks who want to take their place in the world.”

Senator Dodson said: “Today we have had Aboriginal kids flying in from many different places, from diverse backgrounds. They have been able to meet parliamentarians of different parties, learn about the roles of senators and members of parliament.”