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Future PMs' how-to guide for Albanese



MARTIN OLLMAN/NEWSWIRE

Students Amalia Birch, left, and Laiko Sagiba meet Anthony Albanese at Parliament House on Wednesday

ELIZABETH PIKE

Amalia Birch and Laiko Sagiba have big plans for the country – and they want Parliament House to know about them.

The Year 11 students, from Port Hedland in Western Australia and Palmerston in the Northern Territory, met politicians from across the political aisle on Wednesday as the winners of the annual "If I was Prime Minister" competition.

Improving opportunities for Indigenous youth and resourcing remote communities were among the ideas the students put to Anthony Albanese, as part of their visions for the country that would bridge the "huge gap" between their home towns and the halls of parliament.

"From city to country, it's two different worlds," Amalia said.

For the competition, run by the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation since 2013, Amalia and Laiko filmed videos about what they would do if they were leaders.

Laiko told the Prime Minister about the need for communities to work together to combat the disadvantage faced by Indigenous people across the country, which required more than just a "one-size-fits all approach".

"In order for this all to work and to come into fruition, we need to work together instead of working against each other," Laiko said.

AIEF
AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Extending regional youth programs beyond sport to activities such as drama, financial literacy and early trade skills would help a range of young Indigenous people set themselves up for life, Laiko said.

Mandatory parenting programs and community-led housing organisations would prevent further health and infrastructure issues down the line. "It shouldn't be something that we just accept and that's just the way that life is because it's really not OK," she said.

After the failed voice referendum, Amalia said she wanted to see a revived effort to hear from Indigenous communities alongside better support for the homeless community to secure employment.

Both students said they would consider a career in politics after meeting with members of the government and Coalition, despite holding different views.

"We might not agree with what they stand for or things that they say, it's still very good to be civil and have those valuable conversations. I think we've gotten a lot out of today," Laiko said.

"(Mr Albanese) was taking on board what we were saying and sort of rebutting ... he talked about the initiatives he had put into communities." As AIEF scholarship recipients, Laiko attends school in Townsville and Amalia goes to school in Perth – hours from their respective communities.

The students said they wanted to see more Aboriginal people in parliament, representing a range of different communities, languages and cultures, as part of their vision for the future.

"We all come from different walks of life, and I think that it would be extremely valuable for the parliament, and any workplace in general, to have that first-hand experience and knowledge from First Nations people," Laiko said.