

Laptop donations to get a tax break

AAP

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Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has announced tax deductible status for donations to the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) scheme after saying the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous schoolchildren is still unacceptably large.

About 1500 laptops have been distributed to indigenous schoolchildren in 20 "disadvantaged" schools in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland since OLPC, a not-for-profit company, began working in Australia.

It hopes to deliver up to 20,000 machines to schools in the same regions by 2012.

The commonwealth's decision to make donations to OLPC tax deductible would help attract more funds from private and corporate donors, Mr Rudd said. But he admitted that the federal government's efforts to bridge the gap between indigenous and nonindigenous children had been slow.

"When we look at the figures, they are troubling figures," the Prime Minister said during a black-tie dinner hosted by OLPC in Sydney on Thursday.

"In Year Five reading, just 63 per cent of indigenous children were at or above the national minimum standard compared to 92 per cent of non-indigenous children.

"In Year Three numeracy, 96 per cent of non-indigenous children met or exceeded the standard, 78 per cent of indigenous students did.

"These figures are unacceptable. Part of being honest about this as a nation is to be honest about how big the gap is."