

## **Australian Prime Minister Rudd Speaks on One Laptop per Child**

*Australian Government News*

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Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd issued the following transcript:

Prime Minister Speech to the One Laptop Per Child gala dinner Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney

I acknowledge the First Australians on whose land we meet, and whose cultures we celebrate as among the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

And I thank everyone for being here tonight as we celebrate the work of a really great initiative. Since January 2008, One Laptop Per Child Australia has rolled out more than 1,500 laptops to kids in remote and disadvantaged communities across Australia.

To kids at Jigalong Remote Community School in Western Australia. At Tullawong School in Queensland. At Yirrkala School in the Northern Territory, which I had the pleasure to visit a couple of years ago.

And with the aspiration of providing up to 20,000 laptops by 2012, so that all kids have the chance of reaching their full potential, no matter where they live or what school they go to.

This is a really good initiative. It is what building a stronger, fairer Australia is all about.

Giving children the opportunity to experience a world beyond the boundaries of where they live. Giving them access to education.

And that's what they can do with these tough little laptops.

The XO is dustproof. It's waterproof. It's got a state-of-the-art screen that can be used in the sun. It's low on energy use. And it can handle being thrown around or dropped. Most importantly, it is loaded with educational programs to inspire children to engage with education and connect with digital technology.

Earlier this year, I delivered the progress report on Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

And that report made clear that while literacy and numeracy scores varied across grades, Indigenous children are consistently not meeting a minimum standard.

In Year 5 reading, just 63.4 per cent of Indigenous children were at or above the national minimum standard, compared with 92.6 per cent of non-Indigenous children. In Year 3 numeracy, 96 per cent of non-Indigenous students met or exceeded the standard, but only 78.6 per cent of Indigenous students did. And the more remote the student, the bigger the gap.

In 2009, the percentage of Indigenous students living in very remote areas who met national minimum standards was as low as 26.4 per cent for Year 5 reading and 21.4 per cent for Year 9 writing.

We can do better. We must do better. And we are committed to doing better.

The Australian Government is passionately committed to giving all kids access to the best education possible.

That's why we are investing \$2.2 billion to give school students in Years 9 to 12 access to digital technologies, through the Digital Education Revolution initiative.

It's why we are investing \$2.5 billion through National Partnership arrangements with states and territories to improve literacy and numeracy, to support sustained teacher quality and to target disadvantaged communities.

It is why we have invested in the biggest school modernisation program the nation has ever seen. And it is why I am delighted that OLPC Australia is complementing our work through this initiative.

This is practical work, on the ground, where it is vitally needed. It builds on work that One Laptop Per Child is doing around the globe with disadvantaged children.

It has been made possible by the generous support of corporate partners - the Commonwealth Bank, Telstra and News Ltd - and by donations from ordinary Australians, digging deep into their pockets.

And tonight I can announce that the Government will support OLPC Australia in its fundraising activities.

With the Assistant Treasurer, I am delighted to announce that the Government will amend the income tax law to make donations of \$2 or more to OLPC Australia tax deductible.

The decision will be effective from today, subject to public fund requirements. This is a practical way to support the important work that OLPC Australia is doing to give children the chance to reach their potential.

Kids in Umbakumba. In Robinson River. In Nhulunbhuy.

In the words of John Hartigan, "...kids [who] are punished because of their isolation being given an opportunity to get an eye on the world".

OLPC Australia is all about opportunity. And I thank you for your work.