



Laptops bringing 'magic' to children

LOW-cost laptops are one way Shepherdson College is keeping children engaged at school on Elcho Island.

The community was one of the trial locations for One Laptop Per Child, and last week hosted its Australian launch.

Not-for-profit organisation One Laptop Per Child has provided rugged, low-powered XO laptops to 400 primary school-aged children.

The program reached children in the Northern Territory communities of Elcho Island and Newcastle Waters, and at Rawa Community School in Western Australian.

Year 4, 5 and 6 students at Shepherdson College were each given their very own XO laptop to use at school and at home.

School principal Bryan Hughes said the laptops had provided a sense of magic for students, with ownership building responsibility.

"The likelihood of these kids owning a computer outside of this program is very little," Mr Hughes said.

"The computers are another way of hooking kids into learning, and they provide teachers with



LEFT: Laptops have been delivered to school children in remote areas of the Northern Territory and Western Australia as part of the One Laptop Per Child program.

another learning tool.

"This technology supports the school's other strategies to improve attendance and provides students with a strong incentive to learn about technology.

"Yolngu students and assistant teachers have quickly learnt new skills and gained self confidence in their use of computers through this program," Yolngu chairperson of the Shepherdson College School Council, Marcus Lacey, said.

"We are happy to work with the OLPC team to develop our Yolngu Matha language into a program.

"Different students have been turning up to school each day to

receive their laptop."

"Effective teaching and appropriate technology are the keys to enhancing the quality and range of education available to Territory students," chief executive Gary Barnes said.

"Training programs have been introduced for teachers to help them deliver engaging and high-quality literacy and numeracy programs using new technology."

The Northern Territory Government has supported developing technology at Shepherdson College, including the XO laptops, by providing fibre optic services and installing a broadband wireless network for the use of students and teachers.