



## Yirrkala kids get their own laptops



SCHOOL children at Yirrkala in the Northern Territory had every reason to smile last week as they were presented with their very own laptop computers.

The early-Easter present came courtesy of One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) Australia, which announced on the day that it plans to deliver 15,000 XO laptops to remote schools across Australia over the next 12 months.

The scheme was devised five years ago by an American scientist, Nicholas Negroponte of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and has since spread around the world.

Globally the organisation has shipped one million of its laptops over the past 24 months to disadvantaged children in 31

countries. It began its Australian rollout last May.

In Australia, with the support of corporate sponsors Telstra, Commonwealth Bank and News Ltd, it is expected that by the time the program is completed in 2014, about 400,000 laptops would have been distributed.

They are compact devices designed to withstand harsh environments, link remote schools, and provide educational material as well as internet access.

OLPC Australia Executive Director Rangan Srikhanta said the support from corporate Australia had 'bolstered our ability to deliver on our promise of providing one laptop for each child in remote Australia'.

"By providing children with this educational opportunity we will play a

crucial role in closing the gap," he said.

At Yirrkala, on the north-eastern tip of Arnhem Land, Federal Minister for Employment Participation Mark Arbib said the laptops would help ensure children in remote communities had the same access to opportunities as children in major towns and cities.

"The Australian Government is lifting the educational outcomes of Indigenous students and investing in more teachers, programs and infrastructure to support increased attendance and improved literacy and numeracy skills of students," he said.

NT Minister for Education and Training Chris Burns and Minister for Indigenous Development Malarndirri McCarthy also congratulated and thanked the One Laptop Per Child organisation.

Telstra Chief Executive Officer David Thodey said the company was proud to be a partner with OLPC in a scheme which would overcome the barrier of distance.

"Telstra will also help ensure that students, with guidance from their teachers, stay safe online while making the most of their new technology," he said.

Commonwealth Bank chief Michael Harte said that as a founding partner, the bank had been involved in everything from fundraising, business advice and office space for OLPC Australia.

News Ltd CEO John Hartigan said the company was delighted with the partnership as there 'were few better ways to overcome Indigenous disadvantage than through education'.