

Free laptops open up world to kids



Students from Kiwirrkurra Community School show off their laptops.

LEIGH DAWSON

THE One Laptop per Child Australia initiative recently distributed more than 580 XO educational laptops to primary school children in the Pilbara.

The specially designed learning devices come preloaded with more than 50 educational applications with built-in wireless allowing easy access to the internet for children.

Pilbara schools involved in the program included Jigalong Remote Community School, Kiwirrkurra Community School, Nullagine Rural Community School, the Punmu and Kunawarritji campuses in Rawa, and Tullawong, Waralung and Wiluna Remote Community Schools.

The Pilbara Development Commission, New-Crest Mining and Pilbara MP Tom Stephens supported the not-for-profit organisation by providing funding and logistics for the laptops to be distributed to students aged from four to 15 at the remote schools.

OLPC Australia executive director Rangan Srihanta said more than one million children owned an XO laptop, but not much more could be done without significant support from corporate Australia and government bodies.

"By donating to OLPC Australia, people can play



More than one million students around the world own an XO laptop.

an integral role in changing the lives of the children that we work with," he said.

"The provision of a laptop to a child is a wonderful gift that will make a marked difference in their ability to learn and create a future for themselves.

"If you consider the money being spent on education in Australia, the purchase and provision of laptops for these children is not an unrealistic hope for government contribution."

While it costs about USD\$199 to buy an XO laptop, Mr Srihanta said OLPC Australia insisted on

the device being free to the child and being subsidised by donor and government funding.

He also hoped the wireless capabilities of the laptop would create demand for improved wireless internet connectivity at schools in the Pilbara, to ensure all students have access to interactive learning.

Year 3 teacher Ellen Tompsett said the laptops were extremely popular with her students, while Year 3/4 teacher Nicole Pestell said they had prompted discussion, independence and teamwork in the classroom.

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Wouldn't miss it for the world

Sister schooling scheme success

MICHELLE HAMMOND

FROM Perth to the Pilbara — that's how far eight students and three teachers travelled as part of a sister schooling program between Mt Lawley Senior High School and Hedland Senior High School.

Sponsored by BHP Billiton, the schools have enjoyed a four-year relationship, which has allowed staff and students to share resources.

It was the first visit from the Perth end, consisting of Year 11 students who have selected specific subjects in order to attend university.

As part of the two-day stop-over, students from both schools participated in subject-specific revision workshops in the lead-up to exams.

The visit was based on feedback from last year's Hedland SHS Year 12s, who said such workshops would benefit Year



Year 11 students from Mt Lawley and Hedland senior high schools team up for two days as part of a sister schooling program.

11 and 12 students. The workshops covered English, history, mathematics and human biological science.

Mt Lawley HSH mathematics teacher Angelo Zimarino said the visit was a good learning curve for the students and staff of both schools.

Mr Zimarino said the Mt Law-

ley Year 11 SHS students were selected not on their academic merit but on their ability to adapt to another school setting and interact with the students.

He said Hedland SHS was a fantastic school and was not overly different from his own school.

Centrelink offers cheap PCs

CENTRELINK customers can now buy low-cost PCs thanks to an ongoing partnership with the not-for-profit group WorkVentures.

This initiative has seen more than 15,000 PCs go to Centrelink customers since 2008, which enables users to get connected to the online world.

WorkVentures has a new collection of PCs available including internet-ready Pentium 4s with Windows XP Pro, Microsoft Office 2003 and technical support from \$290 plus delivery.

The PCs are professionally

refurbished complete desktop systems which will easily handle all key PC and internet tasks.

South Hedland Centrelink manager Rhonda Towie said the PCs would allow customers to use Centrelink's online resources as well as browsing a range of education and job search benefits.

"People have told us they want to be able to do business with us when it suits then and our online self-service options are designed to meet that demand," she said.

"Students, families, seniors and nominees can all use online

self service to do routine business with us and soon job seekers will be able to as well.

"With more than four million customers registered for self service, it makes sense for us to help more customers do Centrelink business in their own time, at their own convenience."

The discounted PC offer is available to Centrelink concession card holders, schools and not-for-profit organisations.

People interested in purchasing a low-cost PC can contact their local Centrelink or WorkVentures on 1800 112 205.