

## Indigenous support builds

*Education and employment the antidote to disadvantage*

INDIGENOUS disadvantage remains one of our nation's most pressing challenges and we rightly expect our governments to lead efforts to help our fellow Australians make the most of the opportunities our country provides. But, as in most endeavours, governments can't do all the work and, in fact, to properly banish disadvantage it is the vast mainstream of the nation, and businesses and non-government organisations, that must embrace indigenous Australians, and vice versa. So it was encouraging that yesterday *The Australian's* Patricia Karvelas and Justine Ferrari shared separate reports that demonstrate growing success in important private endeavours. To be sure, both the Generation One indigenous employment movement and the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation rely on significant government co-operation and support. But they are both driven and largely funded by private enterprise, and, significantly, rely on intimate engagement with businesses and organisations outside the sphere of government. As Australia prepares to consider the next step in Aboriginal reconciliation — a proposal due early next year to include recognition of

indigenous Australians in our Constitution — it is important to realise that, quite apart from apologies, symbolism and recognition, the most crucial factors in redressing disadvantage must always be education and employment. All experience tells us that, from these building blocks, people will develop better health, live longer lives and engage more fully in community life. Both these initiatives owe their genesis to the inspiration and dedication of individual, successful men. Andrew "Twiggy" Forrest founded Generation One and Andrew Penfold established the AIEF. On opposite sides of the country, both men grew up in close contact with indigenous disadvantage and, after making their fortunes, have dedicated themselves to help people seize control of their own destinies through the powerful building blocks of education and employment. As they aim to provide 2000 scholarships and 50,000 jobs, there is a long way to go. Some would cower in the face of the task. But these programs are looking to build on their foundations. Thankfully, both have extensive backing and are delivering ever more success stories. We salute and encourage their efforts.