

## Latiesha delivers on promise of a lifetime

 **AIEF**  
AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS  
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

GINA RUSHTON

If you had told Latiesha Dunbar that one day she would confidently address a high-powered audience including Tony Abbott, she'd scarcely have believed it.

But at the launch yesterday of a report into best practice in teaching indigenous students, Ms Dunbar was engaging and direct, a far cry from the Darwin schoolgirl who applied in 2010 for a scholarship with the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation.

"If you give me this scholarship, I promise I will be the first person in my family to graduate from Year 12," Ms Dunbar, then aged 15, vowed.

"I kept that promise," she de-



JOHN FEDER

**James Clarke, Latiesha Dunbar and Kalina Luna yesterday**

clared yesterday, to wild applause.

Ms Dunbar, 20, is in her final year of a bachelor of media and communications course at the Queensland University of Technology. Once she graduates, she hopes to chase acting opportunities in Sydney and Melbourne.

"Now that I've just spoken in front of the Prime Minister, I think I'll be OK," she joked.

Ms Dunbar inspired her brother to win a scholarship to Brisbane's St Joseph's College Nudgee. "I'm able to be a role model for my community and my

younger siblings and I want them to know that taking the first step is the hardest part and once you get that done you can grab every opportunity," she said.

These are the young indigenous men and women who have become "masters of their own destiny", Mr Abbott told educators and business leaders including David Gonski and Commonwealth Bank boss Ian Narev.

"Some 93 per cent (of AIEF students) are completing Year 12 and that is remarkable by any standards," he said. "The commonwealth, I have to say, does spend a fair bit of time investing in failure. What we are being invited to do today ... is invest in success."

AIEF executive director Andrew Penfold said the program had far outstripped the commonwealth's \$32 million investment, reaching \$94m since 2009. "As you can see ... the private sector is outdoing you at the moment two to one," he jibed in a bid for extra funding for the "50-50" venture.