MEDIA RELEASE

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MINISTERS PRAISE WALGETT’S PRACTICAL SOLUTION TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion and NSW Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli today praised the Walgett community for coming up with a practical solution to improve school attendance.

The community proposed a project constructing bus turnarounds and shelters at Namoi Village and Gingie Reserve to overcome the problem of students not being able to attend school in wet weather because of buses getting bogged.

The Federal Government contributed $266,000 through the Remote School Attendance Strategy. The NSW Government is meeting the balance of the project that will cost more than $420,000 as part of its Connected Communities program.

“Walgett is one of three NSW communities participating in the Remote School Attendance Strategy which has also created 23 jobs for local people,” Mr Scullion said.

“Getting children to school is the Federal Government’s number one priority in Indigenous Affairs.

“Going to school and being at school every day gives every child the best chance for a good start in life.”

Mr Piccoli said it was the community who initially came up with the practical solution to a long-running problem.

“This is a simple, but effective solution to improve school attendance that came out of a conversation with members of the local community,” Mr Piccoli said.

“They told me how local kids could not get to school when it was wet because buses risked getting bogged at Namoi Village and Gingie Reserve.

“Once the turnarounds are completed, wet weather will no longer be a barrier in getting to school every day.”

Mr Scullion said the turnarounds and shelters will reinforce the Remote School Attendance Strategy at Walgett Community College.
“The Remote School Attendance Strategy teams help parents and carers to get children to school every day,” Mr Scullion said.

“This project complements the efforts of our Remote School Attendance Strategy team members at Walgett Community College who are working hard to improve school attendance so that every child attends every day.”

Mr Piccoli said the turnarounds and shelters demonstrated the advances that were being achieved through the Connected Communities strategy that is operating in 15 NSW schools.

“The vision of Connected Communities is to build a productive partnership with the local community and through that collaboration, create better educational opportunities and life outcomes for the students,” Mr Piccoli said.

“This has grown out of a local idea and become a reality as the result of a productive partnership between the NSW Government, Walgett Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Commonwealth Government’s Remote School Attendance Strategy.”

Federal Member for Parkes, Mark Coulton said that these improvements would make it easier for children at Namoi Village and Gingie Reserve to get to school.

“The bus turnarounds and shelters are practical and effective measures that will address a very real factor that impacts on local students’ ability to access school,” said Mr Coulton.

At the road opening students rode new bikes donated and personally delivered to Walgett by the Temora Men’s Shed. Helmets were donated by Roads and Maritime Services.

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