19 March 2012

SENIORS WEEK: MINISTER PRAISES ELDERS

The experience and authority of Aboriginal Elders should be celebrated and recognised as an asset to help younger generations, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello MP believes.

Mr Dominello said Seniors Week (18 – 25 March 2012) is the perfect time to consider how NSW can empower Elders to use their knowledge and skills in innovative ways, such as mentoring roles with school children.

“As Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I am passionate about harnessing the wisdom and abilities present in Aboriginal communities, and it is clear to me that Elders could play a larger role in our approach to education and community involvement,” Mr Dominello said.

“I’ve had the pleasure of meeting with many Elders since I took office, and I know from firsthand experience their energy, conviction and commitment to their people is truly impressive.

“Education is probably the greatest factor for creating generational change – we know we must have kids at school. We also know the presence of Aboriginal culture and language can help Aboriginal students to stay engaged with learning.

“Together with my colleagues, I’d like to consider how Elders could play a role in encouraging and maintaining school attendance, perhaps by providing mentoring and guidance to students.

“It’s an idea that’s come up at public consultations for the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs and it’s one I’ve said that we’ll be considering in more detail.

“Each year, Seniors Week reminds us all of the wealth of wisdom and breadth of life-experience that seniors have to share with younger generations. It’s up to us as a society to make the most of that,” Mr Dominello said.

Several events with an Aboriginal theme will be celebrated during NSW Seniors Week 2012, including an Aboriginal Cultural Experience with Seniors Week Ambassador Aunty Beryl Van-Oploo at Darlington on 24 March, the launch of a local Aboriginal Elders Group in Moree on 21 March, and a visit to Aboriginal Sculptures in the Forest at Wellington on 25 March.

For more information on these and other NSW Seniors Week events, visit the website at www.nswseniorsweek.com.au.