EMBARGOED Friday, 13 September 2013

PASSION FOR FOOTY DRIVES IMPROVED SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello and Minister for Western NSW Kevin Humphries officially launched Clontarf Foundation Academies at Bourke High School and Brewarrina Central School today.

“Through sport, the Academies in Bourke and Brewarrina are helping young Aboriginal men improve their education, leadership, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects,” Mr Dominello said.

“To achieve these important goals, the Foundation uses the passion the boys have for football as a vehicle to help them continue their education and stay in school.

“The boys are also active in their local communities, volunteering for organisations such as Meals on Wheels and doing work experience with local employers.”

Since opening its first Academy in 2000 with a small group of just 25 boys in Western Australia, the Foundation has grown to cater for about 2,900 boys in 54 schools across NSW, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Victoria.

There are currently eight Clontarf Academies in seven NSW towns. The academies operate in partnership with local schools.

Mr Humphries said the launch of the academies in Bourke and Brewarrina was an exciting day for the two western NSW communities given the success the academies in other regions have had in improving school attendances.

“Students who have low school attendance, or in some cases no longer attend school at all, are mentored and supported to apply themselves in the classroom and the sporting field,” Mr Humphries said.

“Support from Clontarf then continues after school to help with further training and finding employment.”

The Clontarf Foundation’s Chief Operations Officer, Craig Brierty, said: “While the Bourke and Brewarrina academies are in their infancy we have been pleased to see the re-engagement of students in education and an improvement in attendance rates.

“Over time, as these academies mature, we anticipate achieving average attendance rates of 80% and a retention rate of 90%,” Mr Brierty said.

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