Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello has today announced the two successful service providers selected to operate Opportunity Hubs in Dubbo and the Upper Hunter.

Opportunity Hubs are a key initiative of OCHRE — the NSW Government’s Plan for Aboriginal affairs. They will coordinate and match education and employment opportunities for young Aboriginal people, providing incentives to finish school and transition into employment.

“I am excited to announce that in Dubbo, CentaCare Wilcania-Forbes, and in the Upper Hunter, the Aboriginal Employment Strategy Limited will operate the first Opportunity Hubs in NSW,” Mr Dominello said.

“Opportunity Hubs will target students from primary school right through to high school, encouraging them to stay at school, consider further education and training and find a sustainable job.

“We want to encourage students to start building their career goals by planting the seed of aspiration at a young age.

“If a young Aboriginal child aspires to become a teacher, a hairdresser or an engineer, we want to ensure that local services are coordinated and individualised to help them reach their goals.

“Opportunity Hubs will provide a direct line of sight from school to full-time employment providing a map for students to develop their vocation, get the skills and training needed and allow them to dream big about their career opportunities.

“This is not about creating a new program — it’s about coordinating and linking current services to ensure that each child is given the best opportunity to prosper through education and employment,” he said.

Aboriginal Employment Strategy Chief Executive Danny Lester said he was excited about this pioneering opportunity to work in partnership with service providers to increase options and choices for Aboriginal students.

“This service coordination role will work in partnership with Principals, NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Careers Advisors, Aboriginal Education Officers, local Industry groups, local employers and the parents and guardians of the Aboriginal students,” he said.
“The Opportunity Hub is about helping our Aboriginal youth reach their full potential from within their local communities during their schooling years and beyond.

“Working with students from Years 5 - 7 is critical to the long-term engagement of young people throughout their secondary schooling,” Mr Lester said.

CentaCare Wilcannia-Forbes Director Employment, Training and Youth Services Helen Clark said she was very excited to be working with the NSW Government to respond to the local needs of Aboriginal youth in Dubbo.

“The new Opportunity Hubs will deliver individualised plans for our Aboriginal youth, with a targeted approach and local ownership. Opportunity Hubs complements the mix of services we currently deliver in and around Dubbo.

“We look forward to working with the families and communities to make this a success for Dubbo and most importantly a success for our Aboriginal youth,” Ms Clark said.

Following an Expression of Interest process, Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes and AES Limited successfully demonstrated their capacity to work with Aboriginal communities and form strong partnerships with schools, employer groups, industry, TAFE and universities.

“As with other OCHRE initiatives, we will closely monitor the work of Opportunity Hubs in the initial phase to ensure they deliver the desired outcomes and that information will inform the way other Hubs are run,” Mr Dominello said.

Two other Opportunity Hubs will be located in Tamworth and Campbelltown, with providers announced in early 2014.

Further information about Opportunity Hubs can be found at: http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/opportunity-hubs/

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