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COFFS HARBOUR WELCOMES ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE NEST

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello today launched the Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest in Coffs Harbour and said it would strengthen Aboriginal students’ sense of identity, encouraging them to become more engaged in education and stay in school.

The Nests will create partnerships between schools, TAFEs, universities and Aboriginal communities to connect language resources and provide a pathway to learn traditional language from cradle to grave.

“Our remaining Aboriginal languages are in danger of dying out if we do not make a long-term investment to train more people to teach languages,” Mr Dominello said.

“The Nest will develop more Aboriginal language learners and teachers and aims to build a stronger sense of pride, self-esteem and identity among students.

“Proud young people want to go to school, and proud parents want their children to succeed at school.

“When we consulted over 1,200 Aboriginal community representatives before the creation of OCHRE, the revitalisation of language and culture was the number one thing people asked us to focus on.

“The NSW Government listened and in partnership with Aboriginal communities we have established five Nests, each representing a network of communities bound together by their connection to an Aboriginal language group.

“The Nests have already seen the creation of a K-10 Scope and Sequence – ensuring there is a comprehensive curriculum to develop students’ knowledge and build on their expertise year after year,” he said.

“Today I joined with Aboriginal Elders, representatives of the Gumbaynggirr speaking community, as well as teachers and students from across 25 local schools to mark the start of the Nest based in Coffs Harbour,” Mr Dominello said.

Member for Coffs Harbour, Andrew Fraser, welcomed the announcement and said communities including Woolgoolga, Northern Beaches, Coffs Harbour, Sawtell, Toormina, Urunga, as well as South Grafton, Bellingen and Dorrigo, form part of the Nest.

“I hope the Northern Gumbaynggirr Nest will enable today’s students to progress to become tomorrow’s teachers – helping us to preserve this critically endangered language and foster strong Aboriginal communities in this region,” Mr Fraser said.
Gumbaynggirr man and 2011 Aboriginal Community Worker of the Year, Mark Flanders, said the local community was passionate about preserving its culture and believed the Nest could help consolidate its collective expertise.

“The Nest is a vital resource which will enable the training of more local Aboriginal language speakers, strengthening the teaching of Gumbaynggirr language and culture.

“I want all Aboriginal people, regardless of age, to have the opportunity to learn their traditional language, develop a greater understanding of their culture and have pride in their identity,” he said.

NSW Human Rights Ambassador, Andrew Penfold AM said Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests supported the objectives of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

“I have learnt over time that language and culture are the pillars upon which young people build their identity within a community – be that a family, a school or a workplace.

“International research shows us that the transmission of histories, oral traditions and philosophies is integral to maintaining indigenous cultures.

“I have no doubt that if we save Aboriginal languages, we can help preserve traditional culture,” Mr Penfold said.

The Northern Gumbaynggirr Nest is one of five being established across the state as part of OCHRE – Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment – the NSW Government Plan for Aboriginal affairs.

The four other Nests are in Dubbo - North West Wiradjuri, Lismore – Bundjalung, Wilcannia – Paarkkintji/Barkindji and Lightning Ridge – Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay.

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