MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 30 April 2014

WILCANNIA WELCOMES ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE NEST

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello said an Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest opened in Wilcannia today would serve to strengthen self-confidence among Aboriginal students and help to boost school completion rates.

Mr Dominello was joined at Wilcannia Central School by Member for Murray-Darling John Williams for the official launch of the Nest, one of five across NSW, which will teach students in the traditional Paakkantji/Barkindjii language.

“The Nests will create enduring partnerships between schools, TAFEs, universities and Aboriginal communities to connect language resources and experts – providing 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 who can teach traditional languages.

“We consulted over 1,200 Aboriginal representatives before the creation of OCHRE, the NSW Government Plan for Aboriginal affairs and the revitalisation of language and culture was the number one thing people asked us to focus on.

“That is why the NSW Government has, in partnership with Aboriginal communities, established these Nests to revitalise the teaching of language to ensure it can be preserved for future generations.

“Ultimately it is about fostering pride in identity because proud young people want to go to school and proud parents want their children to succeed at school,” Mr Dominello said.

Member for Murray-Darling John Williams welcomed the Paakkantji/Barkindjii Nest to the region and said it would teach Aboriginal language to students from communities including Wilcannia, Broken Hill, Menindee, Bourke, Mildura and Coomealla.

“The Paakkantji/Barkindjii Nest represents a network of communities bound together by their connection to the language — it includes Aboriginal Elders, teachers, academics and over 750 students from 13 local schools.

“I hope this initiative will enable today’s students progress to become tomorrow’s teachers so we can preserve this traditional language which is a source of great pride to the Aboriginal people of this region,” Mr Williams said.

Mr Dominello said a K-10 Scope and Sequence was being developed across the five Nests by the Office of the Board of Studies and the Aboriginal Education Consultative
Group to ensure consistency in the syllabus for Aboriginal language students across NSW.

“The Scope and Sequence will set a framework for all Aboriginal language and culture students so they have the opportunity to build on their knowledge each year throughout school – in the same way we teach foreign language students.

“It is about offering students the expertise and skills they need to go on and study an Aboriginal language course at University or TAFE and, if they choose, become a language teacher themselves,” Mr Dominello said.

Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are a key initiative of OCHRE – Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment – the NSW Government Plan for Aboriginal affairs which was released in April 2013.

The four other Nests are based in Coffs Harbour (Gumbaynggirr), Dubbo (North West Wiradjuri), Lismore (Bundjalung) and Lightning Ridge (Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay).

An inaugural Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest Forum will be held at the University of Sydney on 26 May.

MEDIA: Matt Dawson 0427 145 575