MEDIA RELEASE

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LIGHTNING RIDGE COMMUNITY WELCOMES ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE NEST

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello said an Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest launched in Lightning Ridge today would strengthen students’ sense of identity, helping them to become more engaged in the classroom and stay in school.

Mr Dominello said the Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay Nest, one of five across NSW, represented a network of Aboriginal communities which included Elders, language experts, teachers, and over 530 students from five schools.

“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,” Mr Dominello said.

“The remaining Aboriginal languages are in danger of dying out if we do not make a long-term investment to train more people to teach traditional languages.

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

“That is why the NSW Government has, in partnership with Aboriginal communities, established this initiative to revitalise the teaching of traditional languages to ensure it is 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,” he said.

Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries welcomed the opening of the Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay Nest and said it would greatly assist students across the communities of Collarenebri, Goodooga, Lightning Ridge and Walgett.

“The Nest represents a long-term investment in preservation a traditional Aboriginal language which is a source of great pride to the Aboriginal people of this region.

“With additional resources and renewed focus, I hope today’s students are imbued with a passion for about learning language – enabling they to go on to teach the next generation,” Mr Humphries.

Brother John Giacon, a linguist who has been working with Yuwaalaraay and Gamilaraay language since 1995, said he was delighted that a Language Nest was being opened in Lightning Ridge.
“Since 1990 elders, younger Gamilaraay Yuwaalaraay people, linguists, and others have been working to rebuild and re-use the languages.

“The importance of language to Gamilaraay Yuwaalaraay people is seen in the expanding number of school programs and from families learning language and using Gamilaraay Yuwaalaraay words for their children’s names.

“The Nests are an important initiative because they can help the community, Elders, teachers and academics to work collaboratively to rebuild these language groups.

“It is hoped the centre, and the State Government’s commitment to Aboriginal languages, will great help people to recover these languages and again make them part of everyday life,” Br Giacon 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.

“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 Wilcannia (Paarkkintji/Barkindjii).

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

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