Learn Earn Legend Program

SPEECH

Monday, 18 November 2013
The Learn Earn Legend Program was an initiative of the former Labor government aimed at encouraging young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to stay at school, to study to get a job and become a legend. For too long the rate of attainment of HSC and postschool education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders has been well below the national average. The former government had a program, Closing the Gap, in particular for educational attainment. We have been achieving results that indicate that the gap is closing.

I am proud to have a strong, active and proud Aboriginal community in my electorate. A number of community organisations do great work in assisting to achieve the aims of the Learn Earn Legend program. One of those great organisations is Souths Cares. Souths Cares is the independent not-for-profit benevolent institution that is an initiative of the South Sydney Rabbitohs rugby league team. This year they have teamed up with the University of Sydney to run the Souths Cares Framing Health project. This is a partnership between the University of Sydney and Souths Cares, designed to challenge the fears and doubts of Aboriginal students about attending university. It is aimed at not only giving them a feel for what it is like to be a student at Sydney university but also helping them to realise that it is well within their reach to become students and that all they have to do is have the drive to go out and get it.

The program was launched in 2013. It sees graduate diploma in Indigenous health studies students from the university work with Souths Cares students who are undertaking their Schools to Work program as part of the Learn Earn Legend! They work collaboratively to produce four short films, aimed at informing and educating their communities about the dangers of smoking. The students had the opportunity to work with university students from the School of Visual Arts in putting these films together.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were from my electorate. They were part of the program. They got the opportunity to experience life behind the scenes as filmmakers. It involved students from Matraville and Alexandria Park high schools and students from a number of other schools throughout New South Wales. They joined with the postgraduate students in working on these films. The aim was to produce a short film from go to whoa. They came up with the idea, storyboarded, wrote the script, directed, shot, starred in, produced and edited these short films. They had a wonderful opportunity to work with these experienced students who were undertaking visual arts as one of their subjects at the University of New South Wales and, importantly, to get experienced in using the software. This was a rare opportunity and it gave students a chance to develop unique skills and to learn invaluable lessons about education and health.

Another aim of the project was to challenge any barriers these Indigenous students may have about attending university in the future. Through their recent experiences on campuses the students now know that university is a real option for them. The South City Rugby League Club also provided access to some of their key players, including Greg Inglis and Beau Champion, who are both undertaking part-time studies at the University of Sydney. These two wonderful players spoke to these young students about university as an option.

I want to congratulate the very gifted students who took part in the program. I want to congratulate Souths Cares for this wonderful initiative. It comes on the back of other programs that they run, such as the Souths Cares Teachers’ Aide program; the Healthy and Active Lifestyle program; the Oral Health program, and the School to Work Transition program—Nanga Mai Marri, which means ‘dream big’.

I want to congratulate, in particular, the general manager of Souths Cares, Shannon Donato, a wonderful community-based person who has the advancement of Indigenous affairs at heart; Leellen Lewis; Indigenous mentor and former State of Origin fullback Rhys Wesser; and administration assistant Kiara Maza.