

Minister for Fair Trading  
Minister for Youth  
Minister for Volunteering

**Linda Burney MP**



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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**\$950,200 towards Better Futures in the Illawarra and South Coast**

Minister for Youth Linda Burney visited the Dapto Koonawarra Youth Connect project today with local MP, Ms Lylea McMahon, where she announced over 950,200 Better Futures funding for six projects for young people in the Illawarra and South Coast over the next three years.

Ms Burney said the Dapto Koonawarra Youth Connect early intervention service will receive \$218,650 this year to support young people from 9 to 15 and to encourage them to stay at school and get an education.

“Dapto Koonawarra Youth Connect is about providing a support network for young people, especially Aboriginal young people, to stay at school, and improving cultural awareness within the participating schools and services,” Ms Burney said.

“Commitment from the area is very high – seven local schools, supported by the eight NSW Government partner agencies, along with Wollongong Council and the Aboriginal Medical Service, are all involved with the project.

“This is reflected in the excellent achievements of the project so far.

“Absolutely paramount is ensuring that kids stay in school and stay connected with their education. The project assists families getting their children to and from school and establishing routines at home.

“At school, additional tuition is provided to Aboriginal students and there is now funding for homework centres at the two local high schools.

“Another problem being addressed is suspensions and the negative impact they have on the students.

“Through advocacy and support, Youth Connect staff work with schools to avoid or reduce the length of school suspensions. They also provide a tutor to assist students continue with their learning if they are on school suspension.”

Ms McMahon has been involved with the community centre and the workers since entering Parliament last year.

“I am very proud of the innovative work undertaken by the Dapto Koonawarra Youth Connect project and the contribution it has made to improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal young people,” Ms McMahon said.

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“The additional funding will mean that the program can grow even stronger and help more young people in getting a good education and contributing positively to their community.”

Better Futures is the lemma Government’s prevention and early support strategy for children and young people aged 9-18 years, giving them improved opportunities to participate positively in their local communities.

Other projects funded by Better Futures in the region are: the Cringila Youth Project, a Shellharbour Koori youth worker, the Eurobodalla Youth Transport scheme, Myimbarr Youth and Family Support Service and Wanga Indingii youth development program on the Far South Coast.

Better Futures funding worth over \$6.7 million from the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) will go to more than 50 projects across the state for young people over the next three years.

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