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JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

JUNIOR RANGERS PROGRAM CREATING PATHWAYS FOR FIRST NATIONS STUDENTS IN WESTERN SYDNEY

First Nations students in Western Sydney now have greater access to on-Country training, with the Albanese Labor Government investing \$50 million to expand the Junior Rangers program nationally.

Secondary students in Western Sydney are among thousands of First Nations students across the country to benefit from the program, which is now available at 50 new sites.

As part of the expansion, 11 New South Wales organisations will share in \$6.7 million to deliver on-Country learning and community-led mentoring, designed to boost school attendance and engagement.

The Junior Rangers program provides students with practical skills in land and water management, presenting opportunities to pursue future careers as Indigenous Rangers.

Sydney organisation Indigenise Pty will receive \$530,000 to implement the program over two years through the Murama River Rangers project.

The project supports up to 50 students annually to engage with their schooling in Western Sydney.

Activities are delivered in partnership with the Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation, Jarara Culture Centre and 10 target schools within the Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese.

A core cohort of up to 10 Junior River Rangers receive training in 'Caring for Country' activities, cultural and eco-tourism, and leadership.

This cohort also act as mentors to 40 other students to foster leadership, belonging, cultural knowledge and environmental stewardship.

Existing Junior Ranger programs in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland have demonstrated the success of locally led on-Country learning, with improved school engagement and retention rates of participants.

The expanded Junior Rangers program supports the Albanese Government's commitment to Closing the Gap in education, employment and life outcomes.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Indigenous Australians, Malarndirri McCarthy:

"By expanding our Junior Rangers program we can keep more First Nations students engaged in education, at the same time strengthening their wellbeing and sense of pride through connection to Country and culture.

"I have no doubt these 11 new sites will build on the outstanding success we are already seeing through the program, with 100 per cent of First Nations students involved in Junior Rangers learning in the second half of last year, staying in school.

"By expanding the program to deliver on-Country learning and community-led mentoring, First Nations students in New South Wales and across the country will have more pathways to future employment as Indigenous Rangers and the opportunity to realise their full potential."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education, Jason Clare:

"This is all about improving education outcomes for Indigenous students.

"These initiatives will boost on-country education for First Nations students, delivering improved access to junior rangers and more choice for families when it comes to culturally appropriate distance learning."

Quotes attributable to Member for Reid, Sally Sitou:

"I am proud to represent an electorate that is home to the wonderful Murama River Rangers program.

"We know that First Nations students have unique needs and this funding boost will allow the Albanese Labor Government's Junior Rangers program to support them across 11 sites in New South Wales, including the team here in Sydney Olympic Park.

"The Murama River Rangers have a long history of providing learning and leadership for local First Nations families and I'm especially pleased that the Albanese Labor Government is supporting their service here in Sydney Olympic Park and across the state."

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