

New paper backs youth mentoring



A NEW paper says mentoring to help overcome negative behaviour is particularly promising for Indigenous young people at risk.

To be effective, however, the local community must be involved in planning and delivering mentoring, parents need to be involved in the mentoring relationship, and relationships between mentors and those being mentored must be long-term and respectful.

Mentoring works best if it begins before Indigenous young people exhibit anti-social or criminal behaviour, lasts at least 12-18 months, and involves regular contact with the mentor.

The paper, 'Mentoring programs for Indigenous youth at risk', can be downloaded from www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap

Qld Govt extends academy support



THE Queensland Government has extended its support for the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy (CYAAA) curriculum model for 12 months until the end of 2014.

The announcement in State Parliament by Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek was welcomed by CYAAA chairman Noel Pearson.

Mr Pearson said the academy's structured curriculum, regular monitoring and assessment, and focus on mastery before progression, had transformed the educational outcomes of some of the most disadvantaged students in Queensland.

"Coming in the wake of the positive signs demonstrated by various evaluations, as well as the recent Queensland Premier's Reconciliation Award for our culture program, and our stage band's debut at the Queensland Music Festival event in Yarrabah, this is another great recognition of the tremendous work of our students, teachers, staff and school communities," he said.

"I look forward to working in further partnership with the Newman and Abbott governments over the coming years to create additional opportunities for disadvantaged students to realise their full potential."

NT young achiever nominations open



NOMINATIONS have opened for the Northern Territory Young Achievers Awards 2013-14.

The awards are open to young people aged 14 to 27, with \$20,000 in prizes spread across nine categories including arts, environment, small business, health and leadership.

The ultimate Young Achiever of the Year will receive an extra \$2000.

Nominations close on November 29 with the winners announced on April 5, 2014. For more information, go to www.awardsaustralia.com or phone 1300 735 445.

Uranium strategy out



QUEENSLAND has moved a step closer to having a uranium mining industry again following the State Government's release of a uranium strategy. It covers all aspects of the approvals process, including environmental standards, safety and health, economic and community development, Indigenous opportunities and native title.

The Government says it wants to begin assessing uranium mining applications from mid-July in 2014 after lifting a long-standing moratorium in 2012. — AAP

Power to Yungngora



THE West Kimberley community of Yungngora has safer and more reliable power supplies after the commissioning of a new one-megawatt power station by Horizon Power. The company is also in the final stages of building a power station to service the east Kimberley community of Kalumburu.

Koorie Youth Council gets \$400,000 from Government



THE Victorian Government has committed

almost \$400,000 for the state's Koorie Youth Council over the next two years.

The council provides a voice to government for Victoria's Indigenous youth.

State Aboriginal Affairs Minister Jeanette Powell said the council was instrumental in providing development opportunities to young Aboriginal Victorians and providing a greater understanding of Aboriginal culture.

"The Koorie Youth Council also provides advice to government departments and organisations on issues affecting Aboriginal young people," she said.

As well as \$384,000 in general funding over the next two years, the Government is also providing \$15,000 for a Koorie Youth Council statewide conference in May next year.

Mrs Powell said the Victorian Government was



Minister Jeanette Powell with the Koorie Youth Council members, from left, Bronwyn Mongta, Elisha Douglas, Neville Jetta, Nayuka Gorrie and Greg Kennedy.

committed to supporting Aboriginal young people through the Koorie Youth Council.

"During our term, the Coalition Government will commit almost \$800,000 in

funding to support the council," she said.

"This funding will support the important work the council does, including advocacy opportunities, partnering with Aboriginal

organisations and other bodies to host events, supporting youth leadership and cultural activities and developing the council membership and communications."

Experts warn on justice for kids

By DARREN COYNE



LEADING child welfare experts have called for a justice reinvestment approach to prevent children entering the criminal justice system.

They were speaking at the National Justice Symposium, organised by Jesuit Social Services, in Melbourne last week.

National Children's Commissioner Megan Mitchell gave the keynote address, in which she noted that children have the same human rights as adults, but were also entitled to special protection because they were vulnerable.

She said hearing children's voices was vital to understanding more clearly what needed to be done to achieve more effective outcomes.

"This is especially necessary for children in vulnerable situations, such as those involved in the juvenile justice system, where the decisions that are being made have a significant impact on their lives," Ms Mitchell said.

She said that Indigenous children continued to be over-represented in the youth justice system.

"They were almost 16 times more likely to be under supervision on an average day in 2011-2012 than a non-Indigenous young person aged 10 to 17," she said.

"In detention, the differences are even more alarming. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 10-17 were 31 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2012,



Muriel Bamblett

up from 27 times as likely in 2008."

Ms Mitchell said Aboriginal over-representation was particularly acute in the teen years.

"Forty-six per cent of all children aged 10-14 under youth justice in 2011-12 were Aboriginal despite making up less than 5 per cent of the population," she said.

Ms Mitchell said it was clear that the over-representation of Indigenous children in statistics on poverty, drug and alcohol use and child protection played a major part in many children's contact with juvenile justice.

"Additional factors for Indigenous children may be intergenerational trauma, experiences of racism and loss of cultural identity and exclusion from school," she said.

"These factors need to be addressed for each and every child, and in government policy, if we are to reduce criminal behaviour and create safer communities."

Ms Mitchell said justice reinvestment, where funds were pumped into communities rather than prisons, should be considered, with communities deciding how those funds were spent.

Another advocate, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency chief executive Muriel Bamblett, also called for a justice reinvestment approach, saying it was 'essential'.

"More community education and development work needs to occur at the local level with the aim of restoring cultural authority," she said.

"What Aboriginal communities need is practical self-determination — that is, empowering our people through capacity-building and resourcing to exercise our right to look after our children."

"An important aspect of this for the child protection system is the transfer of guardianship and court order responsibilities to capacity-built Aboriginal community controlled organisations."

"If over two-thirds of Koorie out-of-home-care cases continue to be in the hands of mainstream organisations and the child protection system, it is inevitable that the debilitating effects of cultural and community disconnection will remain, no matter how good a mainstream agency may be in regards to cultural competency."

The symposium was held at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne.