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BUDGET TO BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES IN NSW

The 2014-15 NSW Budget will fund the state's first Aboriginal Deputy Ombudsman to monitor initiatives to help Aboriginal students stay at school, transition into work and develop pride in their culture and identity, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello said today.

"We believe the best solutions are driven by local communities, backed by independent accountability and delivered in partnership with government. We will provide \$53 million to support initiatives which empower Aboriginal people, multicultural communities, veterans, volunteers and young people," Mr Dominello said.

"\$5.1 million will support the revitalisation of Aboriginal languages through Language and Culture Nests, help match school students with local training opportunities and real jobs through Opportunity Hubs and strengthen governance capacity in communities through Local Decision Making.

"This represents an increase of \$400,000 for Aboriginal initiatives under OCHRE – *Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment* - the NSW Government Plan for Aboriginal Affairs.

"The linchpin of OCHRE is a new accountability framework spearheaded by the appointment of a new Deputy Ombudsman responsible for monitoring and assessing its programs.

"The position, created by the *Ombudsman Amendment (Aboriginal Programs) Act 2014*, will see \$739,000 allocated to the NSW Ombudsman to support the new accountability structure," he said.

Mr Dominello said the Community Relations Commission (CRC) would receive \$11 million to maintain community harmony and maximise social and economic benefits from the state's cultural diversity.

"Funding will enable the *Premier's Harmony Dinner* and the *Premier's Multicultural Media Awards*, which celebrate the strength of our cultural diversity, to continue to grow. A \$1.4 million multicultural grants program will offer funding for initiatives which promote harmony and bring people from diverse backgrounds together as Australians.

"Up to \$1 million will be allocated for 100 NSW high school students to travel to the Gallipoli Dawn Service next year, providing an opportunity to honour the sacrifice of our First World War veterans. \$485,000 in grants will also flow to schools, students and community groups to increase awareness of the Anzac legacy and support our veterans."

Mr Dominello said \$3 million will support youth-led and youth-driven activities focussed on mentoring and empowering young people to play a greater role in the future of their local communities. It includes over \$240,000 for Youth Week activities and events.

“A new Advocate for Children and Young People will be established and will prepare a whole-of-government strategy to address the major issues confronting children and young people in the 21st century including cyber bullying, mental illness, community safety and the misuse of alcohol and drugs.

Mr Dominello said \$250,000 will support Timebanking – a volunteering initiative for members to earn and exchange time credits for their service – to expand into 44 new communities by 30 June 2015.

“Timebanking is strengthening local communities and encouraging greater participation in volunteering.

“NSW became the first state in Australia to roll-out the initiative in 2012, as part of its \$4.5 million Volunteering Strategy which supports our two million-plus volunteers.”

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