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Indigenous Education Forum - ReconciliACTIONnsw

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“Education is the corner stone of social justice. Education and training open unlimited opportunities and empower people to achieve their goals no matter what their background.”

The above words of Minister for Youth Linda Burney’s opening address resonated through the Indigenous Education forum held in NSW Parliament House on Tuesday evening, April 8. This Reconciliation in Parliament event, coinciding with National Youth Week, was organised by the volunteer youth organisation ReconciliACTIONnsw.

Tracey Sen, of the NSW Department of Education, spoke of local programs around NSW which have led to marked improvements in the self-esteem of Aboriginal students and related improvements in attendance and literacy. What these programs seemed to have in common was a mixing of cultural pride and academic engagement. Tracey spoke of lines fading between school and the local Aboriginal communities, indicating the role of schools to work closely with communities.

The importance of role models and mentors was discussed, and the young Jack Manning-Bancroft is surely as good a role model as could be found.

Having founded the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience, Jack continues to grow partnerships with Universities and the broader community to offer mentoring experiences between University students and high school students, whilst fostering cross cultural understanding and awareness.

Other speakers included Darryl French of Tranby Aboriginal College and Sam Jarret, a High School student who has participated in and benefited from programs run by the Marrickville Youth Resource Centre.

The presence of many education professionals and policy makers, including a number of interested politicians, means that these messages are reaching decision makers. The challenge now is for the will to see these ideas translated into support for programs that are proven to benefit indigenous young people.

The Indigenous Education forum, part of the Reconciliation in Parliament series, was organised by ReconciliACTIONnsw, as network of Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people. The Reconciliation in Parliament series is a partnership between ANTaR, the NSW Reconciliation Council, Sydney Friends of Myall Creek and ReconciliACTIONnsw, with bi-partisan parliamentary support.

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