



MEDIA RELEASE

**Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC
Attorney General, Minister for Industrial Relations**

Thursday, September 17, 2009

CAMPS TO STEER LISMORE TEENS AWAY FROM VIOLENCE

Attorney General John Hatzistergos said the Rees Government had given Lismore City Council a \$48,000 grant for a program to strengthen support and cultural pride for local young Aboriginal men.

He said the Red Dust Healing program will hold a series of camps for Aboriginal males, aged 13 to 18, identified as at risk of becoming involved in crime.

“This program aims to reach out to Aboriginal teenagers, who are having problems, and steer them back on track,” said Mr Hatzistergos.

“The camps will help Lismore teenagers strengthen their cultural identity, re-engage them in education and teach conflict management skills.”

Mr Hatzistergos said that during the retreats, participants will learn about their heritage and take part in exercises to improve their self esteem and learn how to resolve disputes peacefully.

Country Labor MLC Ian West said the program would help to address the overrepresentation of young Aboriginal people in custody.

“Instilling cultural pride in troubled Aboriginal teenagers is crucial to getting them back on the right path in life,” Mr West said.

He said Lismore City Council developed the program following consultations with Bundjalung Elders, police and the local community.

Some of the camps will be attended by young Aboriginal male school students, while at least one other will be held for teenagers who are no longer in school. Each camp will accommodate up to 12 participants.

The program will be managed by Community Connections North Coast, which is a major provider of services to young Aboriginal people in Lismore.

Mr Hatzistergos said the Rees Government would continue to support grassroots crime prevention projects.

“The NSW Government has set aside \$1.61 million in the current financial year to help councils implement strategies to create safer communities,” he said.