

Book celebrates successes in Aboriginal education

Case studies and personal stories from Aboriginal students and teachers.

Corin Millais

Teachers Mutual Bank

Aboriginal students in Sydney public schools are “closing the achievement gap” despite sometimes having to overcome significant challenges, according to a book launched this month.

Burbangana: Take hold of my hand and help me up, offers an insight into the accomplishments of Aboriginal students in public education in inner Sydney.

The book incorporates program case studies and personal stories from Aboriginal students and teachers in inner Sydney urban schools, highlighting the importance and value of education in improving learning outcomes and strengthening understanding about Aboriginal culture.

Using a “strategic, bifocal approach” to Aboriginal education, the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) Sydney Region has put in place specific programs to close the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, while also acting to strengthen and increase the number of Aboriginal students achieving the highest levels in schooling.

DEC Regional Director, Sydney Dr Phil Lambert said: “While we acknowledge there is still much work to be done in bridging the national literacy and numeracy divide, there has been some outstanding progress and this inspiring publication is a celebration of what our teachers and students have achieved.”

“Anyone who reads this book will be excited and impressed by the stories, insights, comments and artworks from young people featured, some of whom have had to overcome a range of challenges.

“Behind every child in this book are their families, their Elders, and their people, as well as the resources of Sydney region’s public



schools. There is great pride in what our students and our schools are achieving — they inspire us to maintain our efforts.”

One such example is JJ Cahill Memorial High School captain Grant Maling. Having won awards for his school work, and for his role in the Aboriginal reconciliation process, Grant co-hosts a radio show and obtained a traineeship with the Nine Network.

“It was a long road to get where I am, but now I’m about to wrap up 13 years of schooling and start a new chapter of my life,” he said.

Sydney area public schools have implemented more than 15 school initiatives helping to support Aboriginal school children including Koori Kids Big Day Out, City to Bush Indigenous Cultural Exchange and NAIDOC Week celebrations. There are also regional and partner programs offering additional support to local kids.

Teachers Mutual Bank partnered with DEC Sydney to devel-

op the book, as it is committed to building support for Aboriginal education initiatives and the wider education community.

Teachers Mutual Bank chief executive officer Steve James said: “These students’ stories and accomplishments prove that there is so much to be proud of in urban Aboriginal communities.”

“As one of the largest mutual banks in Australia, we have a passion and, we believe, a responsibility to support the communities in which we conduct our business. There are currently more than 800 permanent Aboriginal teachers in NSW public schools and we invest in a diverse range of activities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers and their communities, to help them flourish.”

Download a PDF of the book at www.tmbank.com.au. A small number of hard copies are also available by emailing csr@tmbank.com.au.