



Mark Speakman
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MEDIA RELEASE

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HELPING ABORIGINAL KIDS GET AHEAD IN WELLO

Wellington Public School will soon boast an innovative program that will help improve health and education outcomes for vulnerable Aboriginal children in the community with help from the NSW Government.

Attorney General Mark Speakman and Nationals Candidate for Dubbo Dugald Saunders said the *Connect ALL* program is designed for Aboriginal youth whose lives have been impacted by trauma, grief and loss, particularly those whose parents are serving custodial sentences.

“Marathon Health will work hand-in-hand with Wellington Public School to deliver *Connect ALL* to a community with the second highest rate of developmentally-vulnerable children in NSW. The investment of \$215,716 into this program illustrates the NSW Government’s commitment to helping local children get the best start in life,” Mr Saunders said.

“The rate of Aboriginal overrepresentation in the criminal justice system is a well-documented tragedy, so it’s vital we engage with children from a young age to help stop the cycle of crime.”

Nearly 60 per cent of the Wellington Public School identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander according to the *My School* website.

Connect ALL will place an occupational therapist with children five days per term delivering a program designed specifically for each child, addressing disability, learning delays, sensory and attention issues. The program will also offer cultural, artistic and sporting activities to support children who are struggling.

Mr Speakman said regular case meetings will be held to review the child’s progress and can include parents, carers, teachers, school counsellors and clinicians.

“The program will focus on mentoring the children, encouraging positive cultural identity and healthy living which will make a huge difference to children’s lives,” Mr Speakman said.

“Having support at school can help boost participants’ self-esteem and build confidence to complete their education, find employment and be positive role models for the next generation.”

Marathon Health is a not-for-profit, registered charity, focused on providing for regional and remote Australians, and works with more than 80 communities across NSW and the ACT.

The NSW Community Safety Fund provides non-government organisations, councils and community groups with grants of up to \$250,000 for initiatives to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.