

MEDIA RELEASE



23 March 2006

Local community praise Koori and Ports youth program

A program designed to provide indigenous and at risk youth with positive learning experiences, whilst focusing on the enjoyable hands-on experience of sailing, has been praised by the local La Perouse indigenous community.

The free of charge, Smooth Sailing, community program was created through a partnership between Koori Communications and Training and Sydney Ports Corporation.

"I would never have thought of putting my children into a sailing course as you just don't hear of Aboriginal sailing", commented parent Paula Mailing. "My daughter, Kalkani, loved the freedom of being out on the water and I noticed a big change in her."

Parent Selina Brown, said, "My daughter, Hayley, had to write about her favourite sport at school – she picked sailing. She said she just can't wait to get out there on Sundays".

La Perouse Aboriginal identity and Koori Communications and Training Director, Peter Cooley, added,

"20 per cent of the population in the La Perouse/Phillip Bay area are under 14 years of age, there is nothing for them to do and little money for them to do it with. A partnership with local industry has been vital to this program.

"The program focused on challenging activities with supportive local mentors to promote health, fitness, fun and self esteem," he concluded.

Child Protection Councillor at Sydney's Children's Hospital, Dr Paul Morgan, believes programs such as Smooth Sailing promote a psychological strength to tolerate frustration or disappointment and not give up.

"The program is a great idea, not only does it teach tangible skills but the tasks are challenging and fun.

It can help to develop a psychological resilience for the kids dealing with activities that are initially difficult and take time to master."

Sydney Ports' Corporate Marketing Manager, Lawrence Allum, said, "This program is about making a difference to the lives of kids in our own backyard. The great thing about this program is it is run by the local community for the local community."

Sydney Ports Corporation is committed to the local communities in which it operates and has a long history of sponsoring and partnering local community events.

Ends

Editor's notes

Smooth Sailing

Targeting 7 -13 year old indigenous and at risk children from the La Perouse and Phillip Bay

community, the program taught the fundamentals of sailing, including how to use sailing equipment, navigate and sail safely.

The eight week program started on Sunday 29th January at Yarra Bay Sailing Club and concluded the teaching phase on Sunday 19 March 2006. Pupils can continue to sail till the sailing season ends in April.

Once the Program is completed participants will have the option of mentoring students in future programs and have the opportunity to join a sailing club.

Smooth Sailing was created in partnership with Koori Communications and Training and Sydney Ports Corporation.

Koori Communications and Training

Koori Communications and Training is run by Director Peter Cooley, who was recently awarded the 2006 NSW children's week child development award. Mr Cooley is a member of the local La Perouse

Aboriginal community and is involved with a variety of youth projects in the area.

The Company was set up in June 2005 to develop and deliver training programs and services specifically for Aboriginal youth and youth at risk. We also run fishing, surfing, golf, remote control race car building and bike building programs and have already had great success in keeping youth at risk of disengaging from school. The company runs on the principle: "Give young people challenges in a way they can relate to and they will not only rise to the challenge but excel at it."

Sydney Ports Corporation

Through a network of port facilities, including Sydney Harbour and Port Botany, Sydney Ports Corporation is responsible for facilitating trade through Sydney's ports for the benefits of the NSW economy and community.

The Corporation was established in 1995 to give a greater focus on commercial port operations, enhance competition and provide services to the shipping and cargo industries within Sydney.

Sydney Ports Corporation handles around \$50 billion of domestic and international trade a year, supporting 17,000 direct and indirect jobs.

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