

INDIGENOUS YOUTH LEADERSHIP

635. Hon KEN BASTON to the Minister for Youth:

Can the minister provide details of an initiative launched last week to improve Indigenous youth leadership opportunities; and how many young people are expected to participate in this initiative?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER replied:

I thank Hon Ken Baston for his question. It is a very good question, because last week, I had the opportunity in the Aboriginal People's Room to launch a very innovative leadership program for young Indigenous people. We all know that improving the potential of young people, in particular young Indigenous people, is critical in Western Australia and across Australia. We want to make sure that young Indigenous leaders play a big role in strengthening their communities and creating new opportunities for their future. There are, of course, a number of Indigenous programs operating across the state. The initiative to which Hon Ken Baston has correctly referred is known as One Sky, Many Paths. That initiative has seen several government agencies come together to deliver what several Indigenous communities have said that they want. As I have said, it involves a number of agencies. The lead partner is the Department for Communities' Office for Youth, for which I am responsible. It also includes the Department of Sport and Recreation, the Department of Education and Training, the Office of Crime Prevention, the Department of Child Protection, and Healthway. The One Sky, Many Paths program will run two parallel streams—one for young Aboriginal men and one for young Aboriginal women. It will involve Challenger TAFE, and it will include a one-week residential component, followed by 10 weeks of project work in a local organisation, followed by another residential course. This will give successful participants a certificate II in leadership. I think we would all agree that that is an ideal springboard for future education and learning for these young people. In addition, the program will involve local mentors. The young people will stay in touch with Challenger TAFE and those involved in the program via modern communication tools, including, obviously, the internet.

In answer to the member's further question about how many young people will be involved, 40 young Aboriginal people aged between 16 and 24 are eligible to participate. That will be this year. The program will then be evaluated with a plan to offer it again in subsequent years. The first program is expected to start in August and the first students are expected to graduate later this year. Applicants need to be nominated and identified as having leadership potential by a member of their community, an elder, a family member or a community worker. Applications close on 17 July 2009. I think all members would agree that such an innovative program should be supported. I hope that all members in this house will encourage young people to put their name forward for such a worthwhile program.