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## LOCAL JPS HELP INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY OBTAIN BIRTH CERTIFICATES

The Tuggerah Lakes Branch of the NSW Justices Association has received a generous grant from the Wallarah 2 Community Foundation to develop their collaboration with the Pathfinders National Aboriginal Birth Certificate Program (PNABCP) and fund the costs associated with attending signing days.

The grant will help the combined forces of the NSW Justices Association and the PNABCP provide essential documentation to thousands of Indigenous Australians in Wyong and regional areas.

The Pathfinders National Aboriginal Birth Certificate Program is a vital initiative devised to help indigenous children obtain birth certificates. To date the Program has provided birth certificates to over 2,000 indigenous children through signing days in regional areas of NSW.

“Annually, 6,000 Aboriginal children across Australia are not registered at birth, and are subsequently denied access to many facets of Australian society,” said Director Bruce Gibbs JP, State Vice President of the NSW Justices Association and Hon. Secretary of the Tuggerah Lakes Branch.

“Without this vital document, many Indigenous Australians face lifetime struggles without access to basic rights and services such as education, employment, getting a tax file number or even opening a bank account.

“Though processing fees amount to \$51, the PNABCP provides free birth certificates for indigenous children. This year’s grant from Wallarah 2 will help cover the cost of travel and accommodation for volunteer JPs to attend local and regional PNABCP signing days.

“Our volunteers are very highly motivated in contributing to positive community outcomes, and were recently acknowledged by Sydney City Council as the top Community Service Provider in the City of Sydney.

“This spirit of contributing to the community by our volunteers is also very much alive in the Tuggerah Lakes area, with members of the public always commenting on the wonderful service provided by our eight community JP desks and expressing their appreciation,” he added.

In addition to providing a tangible document to help Indigenous Australians gain access to important community services, there is also a deeper, emotional connection that comes with obtaining a birth certificate, because parents and carers of children are also eligible.

Mr Gibbs recalled a case in which a 76-year-old Indigenous woman at a PNABCP signing day said that she remembers her mother’s face when she was taken away from her at 6 years of age.

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“After she had signed the bottom of the birth certificate application form, she placed the palm of her hand over the document, and in tears, said, “Now I have an identity”.

“After all these years this woman now had the feeling that she belonged in the land of her birth,” concluded Mr Gibbs.

The funding awarded by Wallarah 2 will also assist the Tuggerah Lakes Branch of the NSW Justices Association to establish awareness signage for the Branch’s eight Community JP Desks, which provide residents across the Wyong region with access to Justice of the Peace services at their convenience.

After receiving a grant from Wallarah 2 last year, the Tuggerah Lakes Branch was able to increase their number of JP services across the Wyong area.

The branch has also reported that their membership increased by 25 per cent since last year, and credited the grant from Wallarah 2 as the catalyst for their now wide reaching accessibility through various membership drives.

Peter Smith, Community Manager of Wallarah 2 Coal Project said, “Wallarrah 2 is proud to support the Tuggerah Lakes Branch in increasing its accessibility as well as helping members of the Central Coast Aboriginal Community to acquire their independence.”

“The Pathfinders National Aboriginal Birth Certificate Program is such an important initiative and we are thrilled that we can help fund the partnership between the NSW Justices Association Tuggerah Lakes Branch and the Pathfinders Program,” he added.



Volunteer JPs at Bateau Bay Shopping Centre Community Desk

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For more information, interviews or photos:  
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