

14 November 2019

EMPOWERING AT-RISK INDIGENOUS YOUTH THROUGH CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

An innovative project designed to help at-risk Indigenous youth return to their cultural roots has received an \$11,000 grant from waste and water management company SUEZ.

Bringing Our Mob Back aims to reduce offending rates among Indigenous youth in Far North Queensland through taking them out on camping and cultural tours with Elders. Participants can connect with culture and country by learning about bush foods and medicines and how to make shelters. They also explore the traditional languages of the region's Jiddabul and Girramay peoples.

The Badjuballa Aboriginal Corporation-led initiative integrates with established government and organisational intervention programs, creating a relaxed setting in which youth are more receptive to their delivery.

Two camps have already taken place at Wujal Wujal and Kirrama, with organisers reporting high levels of engagement and subsequent demand.

Project Leader, Julie Go-Sam said that Bringing Our Mob Back offers a lifeline for youth who have often grown up with domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse in low-income families.

"School attendance is poor, and they are often suspended as a result of their behaviour," Ms Go-Sam said.

"Unless they have a vehicle they are stuck in their small towns, often amusing themselves with alcohol, drugs and crime. Bringing the focus back to Indigenous culture and respect for Elders as cultural custodians reminds them that their lives are meaningful and that they have much to be proud of. This is incredibly powerful in shifting attitudes and preventing them from reoffending," she added.

The program targets males and females aged eight to 18 at high risk of offending, along with younger siblings following in their footsteps. Non-Indigenous youth can also take part. SUEZ's State General Manager Queensland, Peter Hudson, and HR Director, Kim Hall presented a plaque to Ms Go-Sam at Tjapukai Cultural Park on 13 November.

"We are honoured to support Bringing Our Mob Back as part of our ongoing commitment to helping our First Nations people access every opportunity to flourish," Mr Hudson said.

"The project is an outstanding example of how local initiatives can contribute to the greater good. It aligns closely with our objective to advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in particular through its contribution to reducing inequality," he added.

In the last six years, the SUEZ Community Grants program has provided close to \$1 million in funding to community organisations and projects across Australia that help communities and the environment thrive.

Visit www.suezcommunitygrants.com.au to learn more about the SUEZ Community Grants program and the successful applicants and projects.

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About SUEZ

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