



MEDIA RELEASE

Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes

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MAKING EXCITING CONNECTIONS ...

A program aimed at helping young people who have dropped out of school get back on track in Centacare's Wilcannia-Forbes district is garnering attention around the country.

The *Connections* program, launched in two NSW Regions which include Region 15 covering Narromine/Bourke/Dubbo and Region 16 covering Parkes/Cowra/ Narrandera in July assists people between the ages of 13 and 19 disconnected from mainstream schooling and possibly facing personal and social barriers, to re-engage in education, training and/or employment.

Senator Mark Arbib, who helped officially launch the *Connections* program, was so taken with its opportunities to expand skills base and career options for the young vulnerable, that he went public.

He wrote in a column in the Sunday Telegraph about his meeting with two young teenagers who had just completed the *Connections* program. Through this 'connection', the boys – who had not finished high school and were 'finding things tough', started courses at their local TAFE and now have clear aspirations for their future careers, one in hospitality, the other in marine biology.

"Their stories were inspirational – their new sense of self-esteem and confidence was energising," he wrote.

The *Connections* Program is funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. It is managed in Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes by Dream the Pathways co-ordinator, Annette Pascoe.

A variety of approaches are taken to engage young people, including providing a safe and supportive learning environment, addressing cultural issues, identifying skills, interests and hobbies, organising trips and camps to build trust, inspiring dreams, exploring vocational and training opportunities and encouraging an interest in learning.

For further information on The *Connections* Program, contact Centacare on 02 6851 6936.