

Hillside



PASSION FOR POLITICS: Youth parliament participants visit the real deal

Indigenous youth parliament inspires future leaders

THE first National Indigenous Youth Parliament was a success because it encouraged young leaders to seek opportunities and to speak out about issues in their local communities and in Australia more broadly, Member for Canberra (ACT) Gai Brodtmann has told federal parliament.

Ms Brodtmann presided over the event held at Old Parliament House, which was run by YMCA and the Australian Electoral Commission, and coincided with National Sorry Day and the beginning of National Reconciliation Week.

It attracted six representatives from each state and territory and two from the Torres Strait Islands, who presented and debated bills on issues of importance to

them. They also participated in debates in which they spoke about problems in their communities such as alcohol and drug abuse, mental health and suicide.

“They revealed a real passion about a range of issues, such as leadership and the need for more opportunities in local communities,” Ms Brodtmann said.

The event introduced participants to the legislative process in a rigorous way, providing a fascinating experience and a good learning opportunity, she said.

“I am sure they will take this experience back with them to their local communities, and perhaps even aspire to come back to this place one day and represent their local communities as federal members of parliament.” •

Graffiti strategy getting results

A VICTORIAN local council’s graffiti strategy that combines graffiti removal with educational programs is paying dividends, Maria Vamvakinou (Calwell, Vic) has told federal parliament.

The Hume City Council’s Write Signal Project, run in partnership with The Salvation Army Crossroads, is intended to help curb visual vandalism while at the same time encouraging graffiti artists to express their creativity in a socially acceptable manner. The project has received \$127,830 in federal government funding.

In one month alone 1,170 square metres of graffiti was removed in two suburbs, with the community responding positively to the council’s 1300 hotline and other anti-graffiti measures.

“Hume council’s education campaign has also created a new generation of ‘Graffiti Warriors’ who are proud of the city they are growing up in and want to keep their communities clean,” Ms Vamvakinou said.

According to crime data cited by Ms Vamvakinou, teenagers in the 15 to 17-year age bracket are the most prolific graffiti offenders, with local police youth liaison officers indicating that many young people are committing graffiti vandalism due to boredom, lack of direction and lack of support structures. •

Butcher decline bad for consumers

INDEPENDENT local butchers are in need of community support to prevent them from becoming a dying breed, the Member for Hughes (NSW) Craig Kelly has told the House of Representatives.

Mr Kelly is concerned that the increasing dominance of the major supermarkets and resulting distortion of the retail lease market are contributing to the decline in independent operators, with local

butchers having to pay much higher prices per square metre for their rent.

“About 25 years ago, there were over 8,000 independent butchers around our nation. But despite the growth of our population, those numbers today are down to fewer than 3,500,” he said.

Mr Kelly said that as the independent butchers have disappeared from the market, the reduction in competition has resulted in consumers paying

increasingly higher prices for lower quality cuts of meat.

He encouraged members of parliament and the community to try shopping at their local butcher and experience the wide variety of select cuts of premium meats available.

“I strongly recommend that you give them a try. You may just be pleasantly surprised.” •