



Media Release

Tuesday October 27, 2009.

Dubbo College student on PM's Indigenous Roundtable tomorrow



Dubbo College Year 11 student EJ Fernando.

Dubbo College Year 11 student EJ Fernando will represent his family, school and community as one of only 15 young people taking part in the Prime Minister's Indigenous Youth Roundtable at Parliament House in Canberra tomorrow (Wednesday). EJ, the recipient of an Indigenous Youth Leadership Scholarship, is an outstanding student and sportsman held in great esteem by the students and staff of Dubbo College.

"This is a real privilege and I'm very excited about the opportunity to meet the Prime Minister and put forward my ideas on the future of Australia's youth," EJ said. "Dad and mum are pretty pleased and they will be taking me to Canberra for the meeting."

EJ will take part in the Roundtable from 3 to 4.30pm tomorrow and will be asked for his views on issues ranging from education, family life and the community to employment, internet participation, welfare and the law. The Indigenous Roundtable is one of nine meetings to be convened during the coming weeks with outcomes contributing to a National Strategy for Young Australians.

Dubbo College Senior Campus student EJ Fernando with his parents Eric Fernando and Diane Stewart, together with Senior Campus deputy-principal Debbie Head.



EJ's parents Eric Fernando and Diane Stewart said they were very proud of their son.

"EJ has always been thirsty for knowledge and he has been taught to be caring and respectful in his family and community," Ms Stewart said. "He is intelligent and very talented on the sporting field, especially in rugby league and basketball, and I know a lot of younger kids really look up to him. His Aboriginality, which blends Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi cultures, is extremely important to him and he takes his position as a role model for younger people very seriously.

"We certainly believe that EJ will do a great job in Canberra tomorrow."



EJ Fernando with fellow Dubbo College students and Indigenous Youth Leadership Scholars Penny Dunn, Angel Towney and Daryl Kemp. The students were the first from any public school in Australia to attend the annual Indigenous Youth Leadership Conference in September this year.

Dubbo College principal Richard Skinner said EJ's inclusion in the Indigenous Youth Roundtable was recognition of his excellent leadership skills and another major achievement in Indigenous education for the College.

"We currently have 31 Aboriginal students sitting their Higher School Certificates and these are students with a strong cultural identity who want to go out into the world and make a difference," he said. "Students like EJ, who will complete Year 12 next year, make us feel incredibly proud of our Indigenous students, our education programs and the opportunities they bring. We all wish him the very best in Canberra and know that he will do a great job representing the College."