

## Media Release – Hon Shelley Payne MLC

### Learner driver program succeeds in Esperance

21 May 2024

- Driving Access and Equity Program is helping community members access a driver's licence
- State Budget includes more than \$15 million in additional funding for the program, which will be extended into the Great Southern and South West
- A total of \$27.6 million now invested into the program since it launched in 2022

More than 100 people have signed up for the Driving Access and Equity Program (DAEP) since it was introduced in Esperance in May 2023.

Facilitated by Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (ETNTAC), in partnership with Department of Transport, the local program provides fair and equal access to essential driving services for the First Nations community by offering culturally safe driver training.

It does so by supporting participants to overcome challenges arising from literacy levels, identification needs, vision impairments, childcare responsibilities, access to licenced vehicles and drivers, and many other factors that can prevent an individual from achieving their license.

The DAEP program focuses solely on supporting participants by addressing barriers, without conducting the actual driving tests. The DAEP team serve as mentors who in turn collaborate with driving schools to facilitate the lessons for the participants.

DAEP was established in 2022 in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions to help disadvantaged community members overcome barriers and access a driver's licence, with the initiative since expanding into a number of other regions.

The recent State Budget included a \$15.7 million injection for the program, which will allow the Government to continue DAEP in existing regions, expand into the Great Southern and South West for the first time, and run the metro pilot alongside the McGovern Foundation for the next two years.

Since DAEP commenced, 22 community-based organisations across the Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, Mid West and Goldfields-Esperance regions have received grants through the program, including ETNTAC, which received \$344,831.

These grants are helping support local community members with licensing requirements, including access to a safe vehicle, professional driving instruction and supervision, road rules education, and assistance with identity documents.

A total of 3,500 regional residents have received support through the program, while 626 disadvantaged community members have so far obtained a driver's licence.

Of those 626 people that have obtained a licence, 129 have gone on to secure employment, highlighting the importance of the program.

**Comments attributed to Member for the Agricultural Region Hon Shelley Payne MLC:**

“I was pleased to meet with Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation recently and hear that 102 local people have signed up for the Driving Access and Equity Program in its first year.

“Many in our community are unable to obtain employment or access essential services because they do not hold a driver's licence, but DAEP is helping to remove that barrier.

“I commend ETNTAC for their efforts in implementing the program so successfully in Esperance.”

**Comments attributed to ETNTAC CEO Peter Bednall**

“Our members have consistently identified barriers to achieving a driver's licence as having significant consequences for their daily lives.

We are proud of the efforts of the ETNTAC staff members, Johnine Graham and Roslyn Rivers, who have worked so hard to improve the lives of community members through this program.

ETNTAC is very committed to the building on the success of their program and continuing to support our community with the resources and opportunities they deserve.”

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