## Documents Tabled At the Hearing – 15 July 2014

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Bligh pledges $1 million for Kokoda Challenge

March 18, 2012
Bridie Jabour

Anna Bligh announces Labor will spend $1 million on helping troubled youth complete the Kokoda Challenge trek. Photo: Bridie Jabour

A Queensland Labor government would give $1 million to help troubled teenagers take part in the Kokoda Challenge, but the Premier has denied it is her party’s response to the LNP’s boot camp for youth criminals policy.

Ms Bligh made the announcement in the hinterland of the Gold Coast with a team of teenagers behind her who have taken part in the Kokoda Challenge—a 20 week training program that culminates in a 96-kilometre trek through the Gold Coast hinterland and then, for some, Papua New Guinea’s Kokoda Trail.

She said the Labor party would partner with the Kokoda Youth Challenge Association to support 100 troubled youths to do the trek over the next four years.

"We know that adolescence can be a very troubled time, we know that many young people are experiencing family breakdown they are at risk of turning to drugs or crime," she said.

"These programs give them the chance over a long term planned program to really turn their lives around.

"So it’s not about punishment, it’s about opportunity."

Ms Bligh said the policy was not a response to the LNP’s announcement last week they would trial boot camps as an alternative to jail for young criminals.

"I don’t think you could get two more different approaches to the needs of young people, the work that the Kokoda Challenge does and the notion of boot camps," she said.

"Boot camps rests entirely on the proposition of punishment and hardship.

"What this program does is preventative, taking young people before their lives got too far off track, before they end up in the juvenile system and making sure that we challenge them to find the best in themselves."

Current jobs

• 7x Heavy Vehicle Driver
  $33 - $35/hr neg.
  Wacol, QLD 4076
  Adecco Services
  View Job

• Food Safety Auditor
  Brisbane Metro, QLD
  Riverside Group

What this policy means for our community

A re-elected Bligh Government will form a new partnership with the Kokoda Youth Challenge Association to build on our comprehensive child safety, youth justice and early intervention programs.

This new partnership will support the Kokoda Challenge Youth Program to turn around the lives of 100 vulnerable or at risk young Queenslanders over the next 4 years.

**ACTIONS**

- Invest $1 million over four years to support 100 vulnerable or at risk young Queenslanders to participate in the 12 month Kokoda Challenge Youth Program, where they will walk the Kokoda Track and gain an understanding of the values of our diggers, including mateship, endurance, courage and sacrifice.
- Provide a $300,000 grant to support the establishment of Camp Kokoda with critical capital works like roads, shows, 4WD track improvements.

Our challenges

Breaking the cycle of youth offending — or intervening before it takes hold — is a difficult task. The drivers of anti-social behaviour can be complex and multi-faceted, including mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, socio-economic disadvantage, low self-esteem, truancy, poor education, homelessness and conflict at home.

Overcoming these challenges is not easy, but is vital to ensuring at risk and vulnerable young Queenslanders have the opportunity to lead full and productive lives.

Importantly, research shows the importance of peer relationships. Teenagers listen to each other, and the quality of these relationships and friendships can make a real difference to behaviour and social participation.

Young people who have difficulties in developing or maintaining friendships are more likely to be aggressive, perform poorly at school, experience high unemployment later in life and exhibit higher incidence of loneliness and depression.

Giving at risk youth the chance to develop high quality peer relationships and friendships is a critical part of break the cycle of anti-social behaviour and offending.