

Riverina man Caleb Little helps youth 'Work It Out'

Steff Wills



Work It Out program case worker Caleb Little.

“Caleb Little? I know him. He’s a top bloke.”

That's what the 21-year-old is hoping will become a common phrase across Riverina households.

But it was not the description his high school teachers might have predicted, at least until he turned his life around.

The Riverina man is part of Pathways Murrumbidgee’s drug and alcohol program, Work It Out, which was designed to help young indigenous residents remain in work or at school.

It also assists those whose drug or alcohol use has impacted potential employment or further education, regardless of how much or how frequently they use.

Mr Little said it was the support of his family that helped him quit drugs and change the course of his future when he was a teen.

But he said not everyone was as fortunate.

It is the reason Mr Little made it his mission to become a role model for other young Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders. He wanted to prove it was possible to “turn it all around”.

“My teachers used to say: ‘you’re not going to get anywhere in life’,” Mr Little said. “I used that as my drive ... I achieved what they thought would be impossible.” Through sport coaching and family visits, the Griffith man said the outreach-based program was making a difference.

Pathways Murrumbidgee chief John Reid said there was no quick fix for residents going through rehabilitation, but he said Work It Out was bringing services together, tailoring them to individual needs and “bridging the gap”.

He said residents were often unaware of the pathways available to them and had to explain their story 7000 times.

“They know they need help,” Mr Reid said. “They are wondering: ‘where do I go to get it’.”

He said Pathways Murrumbidgee case workers like Caleb Little were “on the ground” across the region and meeting clients in environments that were familiar, comfortable and safe.

Call (02) 6971 7330 or email pathways.murrumbidgee@directionshealth.com for more information.