

Koori kids get ready for class

By COURTNEY TRENWITH

A DAY of fun and games heralded the start of school for 22 Aboriginal children in the Illawarra yesterday.

The youngsters start Kindergarten next week and Illawarra Dubays - an Aboriginal women's group - yesterday held a transition-to-school day for the children and their families at Primbee.

There were also rides, Matilda's Farmyard Nursery and a barbecue.

Each child received a Billy Backpack with a hat, drink bottle and pencil case.

Parents were given advice about preparing for school and dealing with issues during the term.

Dubays' treasurer Denise Freeman said parents were encouraged to be involved in their child's education and to celebrate the start of their schooling.

"A lot of Aboriginal parents have had a negative experience themselves at school so we find that in this generation, our kids have some difficulty integrating into school," Ms Freeman said.

She said the program was important for Aboriginal children.

"(Many of them) are going into quite a non-Aboriginal environment," Ms Freeman said.

"For a lot of them, where they live they often do mingle mostly with Aboriginal people, so that can be quite a shock to some of them.

"The language that non-Aboriginal people use is quite different to what Aboriginal people speak in the home."

The picnic was funded by Families First and the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy.



In the bag: Teana Woods and other Aboriginal children have made a good start to their schooling - and so have their parents.

Picture: HANK van STUIVENBERG