

Baird backing for Burdekin

Cayla Dengate

PREMIER VOWS GROUP'S 'AMAZING WORK' WILL CONTINUE

PREMIER Mike Baird will today hold an emergency meeting with threatened youth provider the Burdekin Association.

The Brookvale-based youth support and homelessness accommodation provider last week missed out on funding allocated by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services, prompting fears for its future.

Mr Baird said he was "determined" to see the association's vital work continue.

"Anyone who knows me has heard me talk about the amazing work of Burdekin," Mr Baird said.

"Whilst funding has in-

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change and moved us to Sydney, from Crescent Head. It was quite a shock. After a few years, we started having problems. I needed somewhere to live.

"I told my course manager

Mr Baird's comments have been echoed by high-profile supporters including Pittwater MP Rob Stokes, who personally called chairwoman Justene Gordon this week, as well as Wakehurst MP Brad Hazzard and War-



at TAFE that I was having problems and he helped me get in contact with Burdekin Association. They were able to find me a house very quickly. I was 16 at the time.

"I was in a really bad situation, with no family to support me, no friends, and they

ringah, Manly and Pittwater councils.

Meanwhile, a "SaveBurdekin" Twitter account and the Burdekin Association Facebook page have been flooded with support from young people who have used

stepped in and were able to help. It was life changing.

"I don't know where I would have ended up without them - probably on the streets ... It's horrible to think other young people in that situation won't have the opportunity."

the service and community members.

Burdekin has run for 30 years and is the largest of its kind in the state, caring for young people aged 12 to 21 on government funding of \$700,000 a year. Its future

now depends on partnering with funded Neutral Bay service Taldumande Youth Services or seeking funds from elsewhere.

Ms Gordon said the association would also continue seeking philanthropic support.

"We haven't accessed our corporate community in the past," she said. "We really don't do a lot of fundraising and our reliance on government funding is something we may want to move away from. We have the capability, the staff and resources to provide a vital service - we just need the funding."

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