Students given a chance to mentor

By COURTNEY TODD

A COMMONWEALTH Bank grant will give more Top End schools access to a peer-mentoring program.

Peer Support Foundation general manager Sharon Austin said the $7800 grant would allow the organisation to access schools who can’t afford to pay for the program.

“Peer Support has been operating for 30 years and has been in the Territory since 2008,” she said.

“We are in about a dozen schools in the NT helping students to develop life skills and social skills.”

Ms Austin said the program teaches Year 6s to mentor younger children in primary schools and Year 10s and 11s to mentor Year 7s in senior schools.

“The program creates a really positive school culture, so connections between students and between students and staff are strengthened.”

Commonwealth Bank Casuarina branch assistant manager Vicky Mathios said the grant comes from the Commonwealth Bank Staff Community Fund.

“We’re helping local kids because they’re our future and we hope as a result of this grant more schools take up this valuable program,” she said.

Year 11 student Rachel Geier, a Peer Support mentor at O’Loughlin College in Darwin, said the program has helped her build confidence and leadership skills.

“And we get to create friendships with Year 7s and make them feel welcome to the school,” she said.

Rachel Geier, 16, and Ivana Schober, 12, are taking part in a peer-mentoring program. Picture: HELEN ORR