



Aboriginal Child, Family and
Community Care State Secretariat
(AbSec)

ABSEC ANNUAL REPORT **2016/2017**



Published October 2017

© Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec)

This publication is copyright. Reproduction of this material from this report should obtain permission from the publishers.

AbSec can be found at:

21 Carrington Road, MARRICKVILLE NSW 2204

Phone: (02) 9559 5299

E-mail: reception@absec.org.au

Website: www.absec.org.au

Facebook: on.fb.me/AbSec

Twitter: [@AbSecNSW](https://twitter.com/AbSecNSW)

Acknowledgement

AbSec would like to acknowledge that our work is conducted on the traditional lands of the Aboriginal nations across New South Wales. Our head office is based on the land of the Gadigal people, who, like the other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia, never ceded their sovereignty. This remains their land.

We pay our respects to Elders both past and present, and to those emerging leaders who will guide us into the future.

We also acknowledge members of the Stolen Generations whose connection to their country was interrupted, and search for belonging and identity has been long and difficult. We stand by them in their struggle.



Contents

A message from our Chairperson.....	2
A message from our Chief Executive Officer.....	4
Who we are	6
Our strategy	8
Strategic direction A: A Voice for our children, families, carers and communities	10
Strategic direction B: Support for the Aboriginal sector	16
Strategic direction C Securing partners and resources.....	22
Strategic direction D: Organisational strength and sustainability	32
Management and governance.....	36
Financials.....	39
Get involved in our work.....	42



A message from our Chairperson



The Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) has had another amazing year, and as always, I am pleased with the progress we are collectively making as a dedicated Aboriginal child and family sector in NSW.

Over the past 12-months, AbSec has remained true to its strategic plan and fulfilling the strategic directions set by the organisation, its membership and broader stakeholders. We have continued to argue the need for greater investment in solutions that are developed from our perspective, as Aboriginal communities. Although there have been some progress made towards this, there is still a long road to travel to ensure our Aboriginal children, families and communities are getting access to the support they need, when they need it and in a manner that will deliver the best possible outcomes.

AbSec has remained committed to implementing the *Plan on a Page for Aboriginal children and young people* (the Plan); developed as a partnership between AbSec, Aboriginal organisations, key stakeholders and the NSW Government. This Plan is a roadmap for change, laying the foundations for a better future, one where we as Aboriginal communities take charge and lead the necessary supports for our Aboriginal children and families impacted by child protection and out of home care in NSW.

There remains challenges to gathering support for the need to change, and for change to occur from our perspective. At AbSec, we are focused on reinforcing the meaning of genuine self-determination and educating those that do not believe it works by showcasing local and international evidence. As the Chairperson of AbSec, our governing Board remain firm in pursuing a society that is underpinned by Aboriginal self-determination as a means to addressing the alarming and disproportionate incidences of Aboriginal children and families coming into contact with child protection and out of home care in NSW.

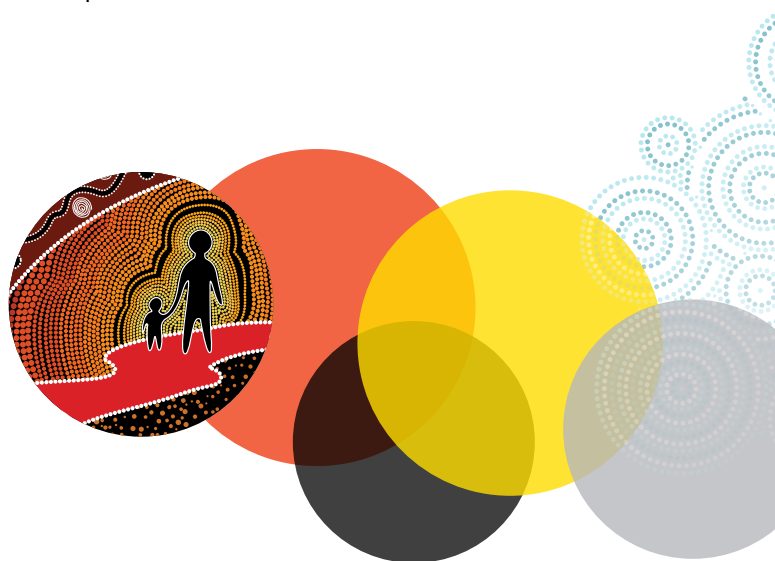
Throughout 2016/17, AbSec has provided significant leadership to the Aboriginal child and family sector in pursuing sustainable and long-term initiatives that will only benefit Aboriginal children, families and communities. This has included working to establish an Aboriginal Child and Family Industry Development Strategy, and working with our partners to realise change that will benefit Aboriginal children and families. The year ahead will see AbSec continue our focus on a holistic response for Aboriginal children and families, integrating service systems to deliver outcomes for Aboriginal children and families. We must focus our attention on a genuine commissioning for outcomes environment from an Aboriginal perspective, where the service system must adapt to meet needs and deliver sustainable impacts for Aboriginal children and families, not the other way around.

As Chairperson, the future of AbSec is strong and sustainable. Our focus remains true to our communities, as the NSW Aboriginal child and family peak organisation. The effort we have applied in the past 12-months will continue to strengthen our focus in years to come, ensuring that as an Aboriginal peak organisation we are accountable to our communities, families and children, as well as our members.

I would like to acknowledge the leadership of AbSec and thank my fellow Board members and our Chief Executive Officer, Mr Tim Ireland, for their continued commitment, passion and drive. With this, our NSW Aboriginal child and family peak organisation will only grow from strength to strength, and our Aboriginal children, families and communities will know they have a voice advocating for their needs.

Ms Dana Clarke

Chairperson



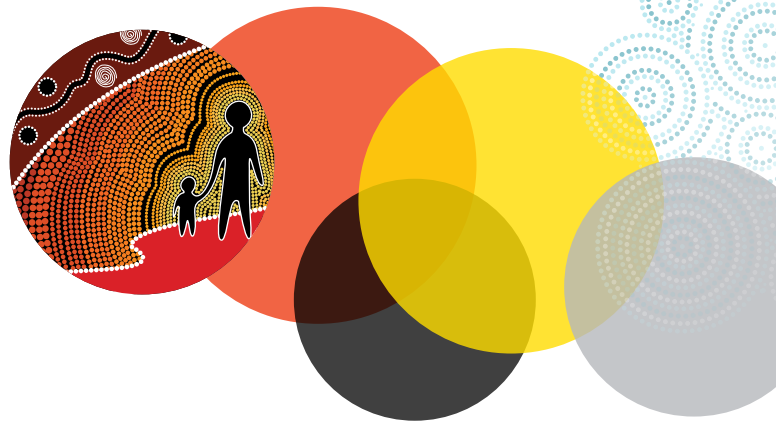
A message from our Chief Executive Officer



Another exciting year has passed for the team at the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec). The 2016/2017 reporting year has built on previous years and focused our attention to the future, as we continue to advocate and represent the interests of Aboriginal children, families and communities, and their organisations across NSW. AbSec has remained focused on our four strategic directions, and this Annual Report provides the highlights of our achievements over that time.

As Chief Executive Officer, I'm proud to be leading a body of work that aims to instil genuine Aboriginal self-determination in the NSW Aboriginal child and family system. Working with partners and stakeholders to ensure the best possible outcome for Aboriginal children and families in NSW remains our critical focus. In saying this, we remain concerned regarding the use of legal orders that would see Aboriginal children removed completely from their families, community, culture and Country.

Over the reporting period, AbSec remains opposed to imposing legal orders that would permanently remove our Aboriginal children from their families and communities, and have commenced a piece of work with the NSW Department of Family and Community Services that would ensure safeguards are established for Aboriginal children subject to guardianship. AbSec remains opposed and in no way supports imposing adoption on Aboriginal children, however, recognises the individual rights of Aboriginal families to make decisions regarding their children. AbSec's position regarding permanent care orders, as formed in our 2015 position paper, remains valid and until such time as a transparent engagement process is established with Aboriginal people and communities to establish genuine safeguards, imposing these types of orders of Aboriginal children is not acceptable.



In the last 12-months, we have remained focused on delivering against our plans, including youth leadership, sector training and development, and delivering on elements of the *Plan on a Page for Aboriginal children and young people*. Importantly, AbSec commenced leading the development of an Aboriginal Case Management policy for NSW, a policy driven by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal children and families. This is due to be released in 2017/18. In addition to this, recognising the need to develop our Aboriginal workforce, AbSec has continued to build up its training arm to offer targeted training to Aboriginal workers in the child and family, and disability sectors in NSW, this will also include accredited training around governance, and leadership and management.

Importantly, in 2016/17 AbSec established and Chairs the NSW Family Matters Collective. This Collective brings together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders to drive change within the system by working to embed the priorities established for NSW. This is a partnership approach, focused on working towards Aboriginal communities having greater control over their supports within the child and family system, and empowering our Aboriginal communities and their organisations to provide for children and families in their location. The priorities were released in the first half of 2017, and the Collective meets quarterly to work through delivering against these priorities.

I'm excited about the year ahead as we work to realise our goals and ensure the best possible outcome for Aboriginal children, families and communities. In doing this, AbSec will be releasing further information regarding our position on the child and family system in NSW, and advocating for legislative change that will empower our communities and organisations to support children and families more effectively. We are faced with challenges, but also opportunities in realising our strategic directions for Aboriginal children, families, communities and organisations as the NSW Aboriginal child and family peak organisation.

I'd like to acknowledge the leadership shown by the Board of AbSec in 2016/17 that has placed us in a sustainable position for the future, as well as the dedication and passion that all staff members at AbSec display in our work. This dedication and passion from both Board and staff will enable us to do more into the future, including engagement broadly with our communities across NSW.

Mr Tim Ireland

Chief Executive Officer

Who we are

The Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) is the peak Aboriginal child and family organisation in NSW. AbSec is committed to advocating on behalf of Aboriginal children, families, carers and communities, and to ensure they have access to the services and supports they need to keep Aboriginal children safe and provide them the best possible opportunities to fulfil their potential through Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

Central to this vision is the need to develop a tailored approach to Aboriginal child and family supports delivering universal, targeted and tertiary services within communities that cover the entire continuum of care and reflect the broader familial and community context of clients. Such services and supports would operate to mitigate risk factors or vulnerabilities thereby reducing the need for more intensive or invasive interventions, as well as ensuring that tailored and critical Aboriginal out-of-home care and after care services are provided to intervene in the cycle of disadvantage that continue to impact generations of Aboriginal families.

OUR PEOPLE

AbSec staff are a diverse group of people, united by their commitment to our goals and values. At 30 June 2017 we had 24 members of staff, 19 of whom were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Our staff come from the Bundjalung, Wiradjuri, Kamilaroi, and other nations. Our team strikes a good gender balance, with 14 female staff and 10 male.

We are always looking for new staff interested in making a difference in our communities, and welcome applications from qualified and dedicated Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Available positions are listed on our website from time to time at absec.org.au/careers.html.



Our strategy

Our priorities and direction are set out in the *Strategic Plan 2015–2018: Caring for our children, families and communities*. Building on AbSec's strong foundations in child protection, this plan seeks to encompass more areas related to the welfare of our Aboriginal children and families, ultimately providing more holistic responses for a safe and successful future, surrounded by Aboriginal culture.

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Defined under the Strategic Plan 2015–2018, these are the outcomes we aim for in pursuit of our larger vision.

Strategic direction A: Our Aboriginal children, families, carers and communities are involved in decision-making, and participate in creating a future that is able to meet their needs within their local community.

Strategic direction B: Our Aboriginal sector is strong, sustainable and capable to cater for the needs of our children, families, carers, people with disability and communities; and is supported to provide more holistic responses.

Strategic direction C: Our partners work with us to ensure Aboriginal children, young people, families, carers and communities are supported in safe, thriving and holistic environments, providing the resources to meet cultural needs and lifelong wellbeing.

Strategic direction D: Our organisation is sustainable and capable of meeting and responding to the challenges of changing environments, ensuring good practices are modelled and represented to our stakeholders.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In working towards our vision, we take the following everyday actions:

- ⦿ Work towards achieving self-determination for Aboriginal people and communities, and building a safe, secure and caring environment for their children and young people that is surrounded by culture
- ⦿ Support Aboriginal organisations in delivering quality holistic supports for all Aboriginal children, young people, families and carers, people with disability and communities
- ⦿ Provide and support opportunities for continual improvement, learning, growth and change for organisations delivering for Aboriginal children, young people, families, people with disability and their communities, recognising the principles of self-determination
- ⦿ Represent and inform government and key stakeholders on the issues facing Aboriginal children, young people, families, carers and communities, particularly in accessing quality holistic supports for lifelong wellbeing surrounded by culture
- ⦿ Support Aboriginal workforce development to ensure a strong and capable workforce for supporting Aboriginal children, young people, families, people with disability and their communities

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Throughout our work we embrace these values and principles:

- ⦿ Acknowledgement and respect — we acknowledge the diversity of all Aboriginal nations and respect traditional owners of the land, constantly reminded by their Elders, and cultural knowledge of communities to inform our actions
- ⦿ Professionalism and integrity — we act with the highest of professionalism for our communities, ensuring our integrity will not be compromised in striving for the provision of quality, culturally responsive and accessible supports
- ⦿ Self-determination — we ensure that our focus is underpinned by the rights of Aboriginal people to make decisions that impact their lives, recognising the interests of Aboriginal children, young people, families and carers, and communities in all that we do
- ⦿ Independence and solutions focused — we serve the interests of Aboriginal children, young people, families, people with disability, communities and the organisations that support them to deliver holistic approaches to issues impacting them
- ⦿ Transparency and commitment— we remain committed to our people in everything we do, ensuring our actions are clear and promoted at every opportunity



A photograph of a woman with dark hair and sunglasses on her head, holding a baby. The woman is smiling slightly. The baby is looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees. There are decorative overlapping circles in shades of orange and yellow on the left side of the image. A yellow circle contains the text 'STRATEGIC DIRECTION A: A Voice for our children, families, carers and communities'.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION A:

A Voice for our
children, families,
carers and
communities

Strategic direction A: Our Aboriginal children, families, carers and communities are involved in decision-making, and participate in creating a future that is able to meet their needs within their local community.

This year we continued our focus on giving voice to diverse Aboriginal perspectives and ensuring that these perspectives inform public policy. These were some of our highlights...



YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Starting with a small but deadly group of young people in 2016, AbSec's Youth Ambassador Program doubled in size over the past year. The program brings together Aboriginal young people with lived experience of the child protection and out-of-home care systems, forming a unified network and providing a platform to share their views.

Our Youth Ambassador Program incorporates the following aims:

- ☉ Celebrate the strength and resilience of our young people, and empower them through a culturally enriched program
- ☉ Motivate and inspire the non-government sector and wider community
- ☉ Influence government and decision-makers
- ☉ Speak publicly on experiences and issues impacting Aboriginal young people across NSW

The Ambassadors released their inaugural youth report early in 2017, reflecting on their work in the first year of the program and presenting results from consultations with other Aboriginal young people about their aspirations, worries and hopes for the future. In these consultations 57 young Aboriginal people from across the state had a chance to express their views. The resulting report offers invaluable insights for anyone working on policies and programs affecting Aboriginal youth.

Among our findings were the following:

- ☉ Relationships with family, peers and communities are vital to helping young people feel safe and supported
- ☉ Young Aboriginal people use the term 'family' broadly to include grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins as well as direct family members
- ☉ Our young people value culture and wish to see it valued by their broader community
- ☉ Young people want access to community services as well as educational and recreational opportunities
- ☉ Issues of drugs, alcohol, and risk-taking behaviour are of key concern to our young people
- ☉ Young people think community and local services need to work together to address challenges

Our Youth Ambassadors also provided valuable input this year to several AbSec papers and policies, including shaping the direction of our foster carer support model.





There are currently more than 6,000 Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in NSW, yet only one in five is in the care of an Aboriginal person or family.

CARING FOR CARERS

This year we renewed our engagement with carers of Aboriginal children, conducting a significant update of our carer records and consulting with both carers and carer support workers about their needs. This culminated in the development of the paper *Caring for Carers: Recruitment, development and support for carers of Aboriginal children*, which outlines a comprehensive carer support model.

We continued our collaboration with Fostering NSW and its parent body, the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, to encourage effective approaches to recruiting Aboriginal carers. There are currently more than 6,000 Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in NSW, yet only one in five is in the care of an Aboriginal person or family. To place our children in culturally appropriate and supportive care, it is essential that we recruit many more Aboriginal carers. Ultimately, whether the carers of our kids are Aboriginal

or non-Indigenous, the work done by those bringing up our next generation is incredibly important, and we are determined to see these hard-working people supported with the right training and care.

We also continued operation of the Aboriginal State-wide Carer Support Service, a longstanding and free telephone support line available to carers 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This year the phone line received 157 incoming calls from carers, who were provided with support, advice, information and access to resources and information. In just the last six months, our Foster Care Support Officer spent almost 1,700 minutes on the phone providing active support to carers. We also currently provide carer information sheets on 21 topics, and are revising these to ensure we continue to cover all areas of key importance to carers of Aboriginal children.



DEVELOPING AN ABORIGINAL CASE MANAGEMENT POLICY

We commenced consultations with communities and individuals across NSW to find out what they would like to see in a case management policy for effectively supporting Aboriginal children and families holistically. Our aim is to build a thorough policy and guidelines to ensure the wellbeing of Aboriginal children from the early intervention stage, through to out-of-home care and after care. (Ideally, our focus is that each child and family has their needs met through early intervention, eliminating the need to take the harmful step of removing them from their families.)

The Aboriginal Case Management Policy and Guidelines is currently in development with a number of stakeholders and due to be delivered in the 2017/2018 financial year. It is on track to be a comprehensive document developed by Aboriginal people for our own communities, with buy-in from Aboriginal agencies across NSW.

CONNECTING VOICES

We continued the Connecting Voices – Aboriginal Family-Led Decision Making program, empowering families to take the lead in working through their issues and identifying solutions.

This evidence-based, original program brings family members to the table to review how their current choices affect each other. The family conferences culminate in the development of a Family Plan, addressing child-related concerns to ensure the wellbeing and safety of the child. The success of the program lies in the fact that families develop their own plans and truly own the outcomes.

While the program proposes a review of the plan at 3 months this can be negotiated with each client and the referring agency, however in this case not all reviews are re-referred to our program.

During the financial year AbSec facilitated nine Connecting Voices family conferences and three reviews.






our focus is that each
child and family has
their needs met through
early intervention



A red wheelchair is positioned in a field of tall grass at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. On the left side of the image, there are three overlapping circles in shades of orange and yellow. A yellow circle is centered over the text.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION B:

Support for the
Aboriginal
sector

The background of the page is a photograph of a wheelchair in a field at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The wheelchair is in the foreground, partially visible on the left side. Overlaid on the image is a large, dotted spiral pattern that fills the upper half of the page.

Strategic direction B: Our Aboriginal sector is strong, sustainable and capable to cater for the needs of our children, families, carers, people with disability and communities; and is supported to provide more holistic responses.

It is our firm belief that effective solutions for Aboriginal children and families must come from Aboriginal organisations, as these agencies are best equipped with the cultural skills to serve their local communities. This year we continued to represent the interests of the Aboriginal sector while providing direct support to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations – all with the ultimate goal of building a better future for our people.



ABORIGINAL AGENCY FORUMS AND WORKSHOPS

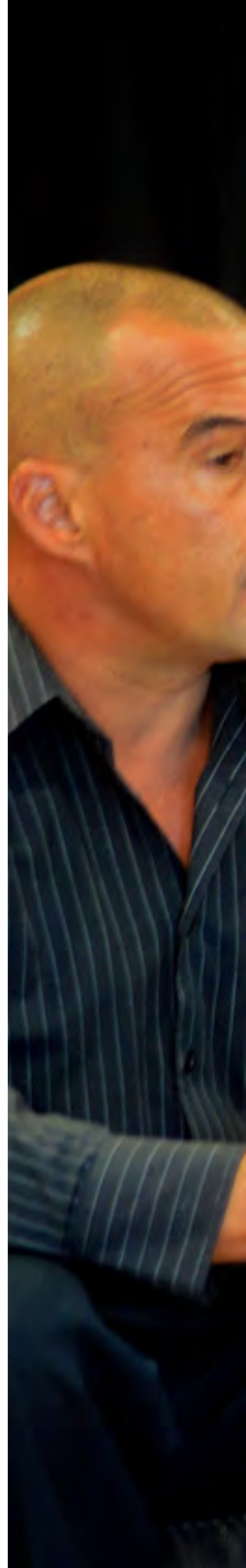
Throughout 2015, 2016 and 2017 we have provided quarterly state-wide forums as an opportunity for Aboriginal agencies to engage with FACS and other stakeholders. A key goal this year was to hold further regular engagement forums, providing an ongoing mechanism for Aboriginal agencies to come together, make their views heard, and learn from one another. These forums also provided us an opportunity to present seminars on issues facing the sector. During the year we held eleven Aboriginal agency forums in Sydney and regional centres, as well as our first gathering open to all AbSec members, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to facilitate robust discussion and relationship-building.

We also held mini-workshops with Aboriginal agencies and carers to improve understanding of reportable conduct, providing practical examples of incidences in out-of-home care that would need to be disclosed to FACS.

ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS

We exceeded our goal of providing a minimum 1,152 hours of face-to-face support to Aboriginal agencies over the year, clocking up a total of 1,314 hours. This support spanned over multiple topic areas; we provided casework advice on kids leaving care, understanding guardianship, supporting carers, carer allowances, developing tools and templates, recruiting staff, and more. We also acted as an intermediary between agencies and the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) to ensure agencies were supported in meeting requirements and maintaining their accreditation and contracts.

Further work was completed in helping Aboriginal agencies to achieve good governance, with the delivery of a best practice indicators report and 23 easy-read information sheets to inform the practice of agencies' boards and management.





WORKING TOWARDS A HOLISTIC SYSTEM

In May 2016, AbSec published a comprehensive paper, *Achieving a holistic Aboriginal child and family service system for NSW*, supported by a jurisdictional scan and benefits analysis completed by Deloitte and commissioned by AbSec. The paper outlines a broad framework for the development of an effective community-controlled service system serving Aboriginal children, families and communities, with the added value that community-controlled mechanism play in achieving beneficial outcomes. Much of our work this year has been focused in efforts to articulate this strategy into practice, and to share it with stakeholders. As part of this, we produced a more detailed service model for strengthening Aboriginal families: *Our families, our way: Strengthening Aboriginal families so their children can thrive*.

SHIFTING THE FOCUS TO EARLY INTERVENTION

Over the last year we have strongly advocated for a greater focus and investment in early intervention programs. Evidence shows that the greatest positive impact can be made for families by providing support early, making a difference before challenges get out-of-hand, and when this is coupled with the resilience, experience and understanding brought by Aboriginal people and organisations – families in turn will be strengthened.

We want to see Aboriginal community-controlled organisations equipped to provide these services in early intervention and support. If Aboriginal children and young people represent between 30% and 40% of the child protection system, then 30-40% of funding should be directed to support them. We were pleased to secure a commitment from FACS that 30% of all targeted earlier intervention funding will be directed towards Aboriginal families by 2021, and that 50% of additional funding for family preservation and restoration services will be dedicated to Aboriginal families.

While this is a significant step in the right direction, more work is still needed to achieve equitable investment for Aboriginal children and families through community-controlled organisations.

BUILDING A SOLID EVIDENCE BASE

We recognise that it is important to capture the work already being done by Aboriginal agencies in supporting our children and families, so that their successes can be translated into a reliable evidence base to be applied in future casework.

We commenced work to develop a number of in-depth case studies exploring how to best support Aboriginal families; these case studies are due for delivery in the 2017/2018 financial year. We also assembled an expert advisory group, bringing together FACS representatives, a sector academic, a young person with experience of the system, a foster carer, and industry representatives. This group has provided advice and evidence from a number of perspectives to strengthen our approaches to supporting our Aboriginal kids and families.



A woman with dark hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and a light-colored apron with blue cursive text, is smiling and cooking on a large black griddle. She is holding a spatula. In the background, there is a brick wall with a white arched opening and several balloons (red, yellow, black) on the left. A yellow circular graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION C:

Securing partners
and resources

Strategic direction C: Our partners work with us to ensure Aboriginal children, young people, families, carers and communities are supported in safe, thriving and holistic environments, providing the resources to meet cultural needs and lifelong wellbeing.

We are aware that significant progress for Aboriginal children and families can only be made through collaboration. AbSec works with diverse partners to pool our expertise and resources, therefore multiplying our impact. These partners include NGOs and non-Aboriginal services, corporate partners, government and key influencers.





BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH EVENTS

This year we ramped up our involvement in community events, recognising them as an important opportunity to engage on a grassroots level with local community members, Elders, and other organisations.

We hosted our first public NAIDOC Week event in July 2016 in partnership with Marrickville Youth and Resource Centre, celebrating Aboriginal culture and providing fun activities for children and families. In August we marked National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day with a gathering at Redfern Community Centre, where we invited several local schools to join us for the day. Aboriginal actor and public figure Luke Carroll performed as MC, and we are pleased to be working with Luke on further initiatives and events in 2017.

AbSec also held a stall at the Yabun Festival in January 2017, where we handed out more

than 200 branded drink bottles and caps and took the opportunity to yarn about our work with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal visitors. Yabun is the largest one-day gathering and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia. We were very pleased to be part of such a significant event and hope to repeat our presence at the 2018 festival.

Another goal for the 2017/2018 financial year is to expand our presence at events into regional areas of NSW, particularly the western region. We are currently developing an engagement plan to continue our work building meaningful relationships with Aboriginal communities in western NSW. At the end of the financial year our planning was also well underway for AbSec's biennial conference, to be held in November 2017 in Coffs Harbour. We are aiming to make this our most well-attended conference yet.

NSW FAMILY MATTERS

The NSW Family Matters Collective (the Collective), made up of more than 19 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations and individuals, and is chaired by AbSec. The Collective drives our approach for change in NSW from an Aboriginal perspective leveraging the support of our non-Aboriginal colleagues, seeking to empower Aboriginal communities across our state to design and deliver the services they need to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities through Aboriginal community controlled organisations. The Collective is principles based, and active in its resolve to see change for Aboriginal children, families and communities from a NSW perspective.

The Priorities of the NSW Family Matters Collective are:

1. Better practice to support and strengthen Aboriginal children and families
2. Empower Aboriginal communities to have self-determination over child protection and safety matters
3. A child protection system that is accountable to and has the confidence of Aboriginal families and communities, including structural and legislative reform
4. Aboriginal community-controlled approaches are best for serving Aboriginal children and families, working in partnership with non-Aboriginal agencies where required
5. Aboriginal people designing the policies that impact on their lives, with support models that drive better outcomes developed by Aboriginal people and families
6. Each Aboriginal child in care has an individualised plan for their future, and is provided with support based on their needs, including support for their cultural rights and connection to family and community developed by Aboriginal people and families

The NSW Family Matters Collective is a jurisdictional approach to the National Family Matters campaign, which aims to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture. Led by SNAICC, Family Matters nationally is supported by a Strategic Alliance of over 150 organisations, academics and prominent educational institutions.



LAUNCHING A CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

We have also dedicated resources to building relationships with the corporate sector, making the best use of our DGR charitable status. While we have contended with challenges including the low public awareness of AbSec outside Aboriginal groups, and the difficulty in fundraising for a peak body as opposed to a direct service provider, it has been pleasing to know that there are people wanting to support our work. Our Youth Ambassador Program has proven particularly marketable, receiving a number of grants and donations. These financial contributions have enabled our Ambassadors to travel to rural locations to connect with local youth, and to attend a morale-boosting cultural camp.

We hope to build upon the solid foundations laid this year for our corporate partnerships program, attracting further donations and opportunities for collective impact in the 2017/2018 financial year.

GROWING OUR MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

We offer membership for organisations, businesses and individuals who are supportive of our work and wish to help us reach our goals. This year membership grew with 41 Organisations and over 400 carers



SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL INITIATIVES THROUGH SPONSORSHIP

AbSec granted a number of sponsorships to local Aboriginal groups across NSW to support diverse initiatives enriching communities. This year, we provided sponsorships to a combined value of over \$42,000, giving a much-needed boost to sporting clubs, cultural celebrations, and local community service groups. We value the impact that sponsorship can make because we see that by sponsoring local activities, increasing our footprint, we are also able to communicate our message and support effective change at the community, organisational, regional and state-wide level. AbSec views our sponsorship effort as a positive change management tool to enabling core messages to be communicated effectively to the audience that should hear it.

Sponsorship case study: Cultural Brothers United Rugby League Football Club

AbSec provided a \$5,000 grant to Cultural Brothers United to support their entry into the 2017 NSW Koori Knockout. Cultural Brothers United is a rugby league team from Western Sydney, competing since 2015 in the Knockout.

“Our club was formed to represent and promote the [Western Sydney] communities in a positive way through active lifestyle, healthier living, building relationships and working together towards reconciliation,” says club leader and co-founder, Aaron Slater.

“We have supported players to build on their strengths, and raised awareness across the community of Indigenous culture and life.

“We have had sons playing alongside their and now the fathers have taken on coaching and training our club and are respected in our local communities.”

AbSec values the impact that local Aboriginal sporting and community groups provide in their communities and the contribution to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people. We sponsor groups that support our objectives, aims and positions in a hope that will draw attention to the work we do and support sustainable and effective change.





FI-TA



Child, Family and Community
Secretariat Care State



AbSec

Sponsorship case study: UTS Indigenous Team for the 2017 Indigenous Uni Games

We gave a \$3,100 sponsorship to a team from the University of Technology, Sydney, allowing them to compete in the 2017 Indigenous Uni Games.

"This year has been the best year yet," said team manager Christopher Combridge. "Since starting to manage the team in 2014, we have slowly progressed each year. This year we placed 8th out of 34 teams, a massive achievement which could not have been possible without your help in sending us to Geelong."

AbSec appreciated the opportunity to provide sponsorship to such committed young students to be able to showcase their talent and compete at Indigenous Uni Games was an opportunity of a life time for many of these players. For us, this meant we were able to raise our profile on a different level, drawing attention to the work we do with a different audience so we can build a stronger collaboration that will realise change for Aboriginal children, families and communities.

Other sponsorship recipients include:

- ⦿ Combined Countries Aboriginal Sporting Club
- ⦿ Dindima Aboriginal Football Club and Riverina Sistas Football Club
- ⦿ Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation
- ⦿ Menindee Yabbies Sporting Club, Far West
- ⦿ Moree Boomerangs Rugby League Football Team
- ⦿ Redfern All Blacks Rugby League Club Incorporated
- ⦿ United Tribes Rugby League Football Team
- ⦿ Walgett NAIDOC Working Group
- ⦿ Wreck Bay Football Club



PARTNERSHIPS FOR GREATER IMPACT

AbSec is pleased to partner with not-for-profit organisations and businesses to accomplish shared goals. In some instances we provide funding for a partnership, while in other cases we are thankful to be the beneficiary of grants, goods or services.

Australian Human Rights Commission

AbSec provided \$20,000 funding to the Australian Human Rights Commission, working in partnership to develop educational resources for the 20th anniversary of the Bringing Them Home report. This partnership built knowledge among school students and the general public about the Stolen Generations and the continuing over-representation of Indigenous children in out-of-home care, providing information to support our case for change.

The Sydney Roosters

AbSec was honoured to be chosen as the community partner for rugby league team the Sydney Roosters during the NRL Indigenous Round. Partnering with the Roosters provided priceless exposure to their hundreds of thousands of fans, and our presence at the game served to raise awareness both of the work we do and the need for better solutions for Aboriginal children and families.

AbSec is the first Aboriginal charity partner for the club and this was a milestone recognised by their players. As part of the partnership, AbSec hosted a stall at the game Roosters vs Parramatta Eels, which involved AbSec providing a range of fun cultural activities in the forecourt and collecting donations from those attending the game.

During the game, ground announcements and a TV advert played reaffirming AbSec aims and goals in ensuring Aboriginal children and young people have meaningful access to culture and the importance culture plays in the their identity and spirit. This provided those in the stadium and watching on television an opening to learn more about our work, and to support us in our endeavours.

AbSec is honoured to continue the relationship with the Roosters, and the professional players within the team. We are especially honoured and welcome the opportunity to continue working with Latrell Mitchell, Grant Garvey and Connor Watson as the Roosters' Aboriginal players.



Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation

We partnered with Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation to deliver cultural resources to the value of \$10,000 for its Oorunga Wandarrah childcare and education centre. The funding has allowed the centre to provide 'Koori cultural bags' to children and families, containing puzzles, books, music, toys and other items that bring together fun, education and culture as part of a library borrowing system.

"There has been an increase in the communication and learning between parents and children," explains centre manager Mary Chatfield. "The Koori cultural bags allow parents to be expert users of non-intimidating learning resources."

THiNK – Marketing Operations Advisory

We were grateful to have THiNK co-founder Steve Gilhooley work with us on pro-bono marketing consultations, helping to build our public profile and presence so we are even more able to use our influence for Aboriginal children, families and communities, and the organisations there to support them.

Scholarship

UTS Business School and AbSec Indigenous Scholarship Program was offered to AbSec Aboriginal members. The scholarship was a fully funded three year Undergraduate Scholarship for the UTS Bachelor of Business Administration.

The successful applicant was Ms Latoya Terry and following the announcement Ms Terry was able to meet the donor organisation who financially backed the scholarship. We are excited to continue pushing this scholarship program, and the partnership we have formed with the UTS.



A photograph of children in red uniforms and caps sitting on a wooden floor. In front of them are several traditional instruments, including a long wooden mallet, a decorated wooden staff, and a wooden box. The image is overlaid with a large yellow circle containing text and several smaller orange and yellow circles on the left side.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION D:

Organisational
strength and
sustainability



Strategic direction D: Our organisation is sustainable and capable of meeting and responding to the challenges of changing environments, ensuring good practices are modelled and represented to our stakeholders.

It is vital that AbSec remains sustainable in the long term to ensure that Aboriginal children and families will be represented well into the future. We devote ongoing efforts and resources to make sure we are at the top of our game in terms of human resources, performance and business practices.



DEVELOPING ABSEC'S TRAINING ARM

In order to effectively equip the Aboriginal child and family sector for the future, we identified a need for more culturally tailored and accessible training opportunities. This led to AbSec acquiring our registered training organisation, AbSec Learning and Development Centre.

The AbSec Learning and Development Centre will contribute to the Aboriginal workforce while opening up a new source of income for our organisation through course fees, which will in turn be funnelled into our existing programs providing support for Aboriginal children and families. AbSec, under the leadership of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, oversee the operations of the AbSec Learning and Development Centre as a standalone entity.

We are currently scoping the provision of five nationally accredited courses:

- ◎ BSB51915: Diploma of Management and Leadership
- ◎ CHC50313: Diploma of Child Youth and Family Intervention

- ◎ CHC40313: Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
- ◎ CHC33015: Certificate III in Individual Support (all three streams)
- ◎ CHC43115: Certificate IV in Disability

The curricula for each of these will incorporate a specific focus on the needs of Aboriginal communities, tailoring learning and in-house supports to the unique needs of our prospective students. Additionally, we have enabled the focus of the AbSec Learning and Development Centre to be centred on the potential for partnerships, recognising the opportunity to leverage skills and knowledge of others through a culturally rich registered training environment. We look forward to sharing progress on this exciting development in our 2017/2018 annual report.



A close-up photograph of a woman with curly hair and sunglasses painting a floral design on a child's face. The woman is wearing a colorful, patterned shirt and has a colorful lei around her neck. The child is wearing a blue and white striped headband and has a colorful lei around their neck. The woman is using a paintbrush to apply the paint to the child's face.

BUILDING AN EVER BETTER ABSEC

Looking to the future and strengthening AbSec, a review of AbSec internal policies were undertaken to ensure they were more contemporary and relatable and we established a new human resources system. This effort is about applying a more modern organisation to deal with the challenges ahead, while also ensuring we are efficient in our areas of focus.

We have commenced the redesign of the AbSec website to ensure it complies with accessibility standards, is easy to read and navigate. In addition, we have commenced the design of our complementary website, AbSec Learning and Development Centre. This links with our increased interaction in social media (Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook) as we have found many of our young people, families, communities and stakeholders prefer this method of engagement.

Looking to the future AbSec will be enhancing our communications so that we can engage and reach more of our stakeholders, and be even more accountable to our families and communities in representing their views.



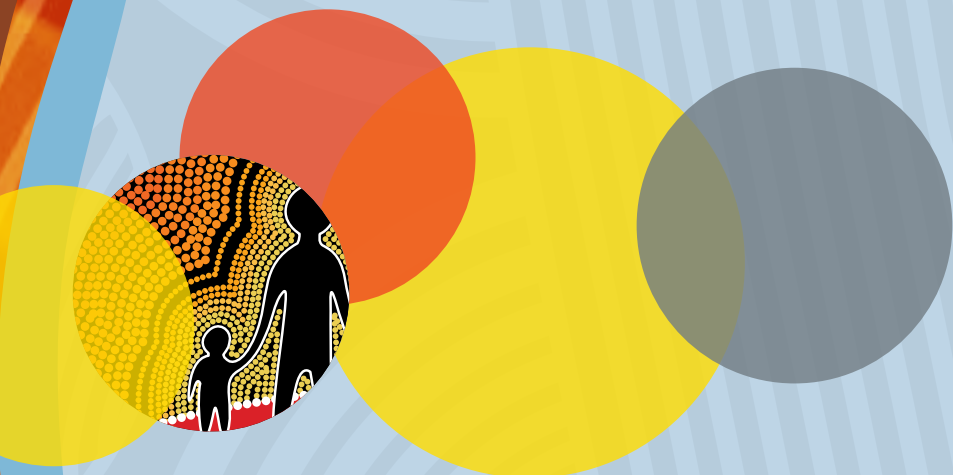
Management and governance

Throughout the 2016/17 period, AbSec had a number of staff members leaving the organisation. Recognising their expertise and knowledge they brought to the Aboriginal sector, AbSec would like to acknowledge their contribution to the organisation during the 12 month period.

OUR CEO

Tim Ireland was appointed Chief Executive Officer of AbSec in 2015. A proud Bundjalung man, Tim previously worked in several senior executive roles at the NSW Department of Family and Community Services, and in Aboriginal community development roles within local government.

Tim holds a Bachelor of Arts from The University of Sydney, specialising in Sociology, Social Policy, Government and International Relations. He is also a graduate of the NSW Public Service Commission's Executive Development Program, a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a practitioner of PRINCE2 Project Management, and a certified Change Management Practitioner (accredited through APMG International and the Change Management Institute).



MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

AbSec's structure is broadly grouped into three main streams, structured to serve our strategic goals and reporting to the CEO.

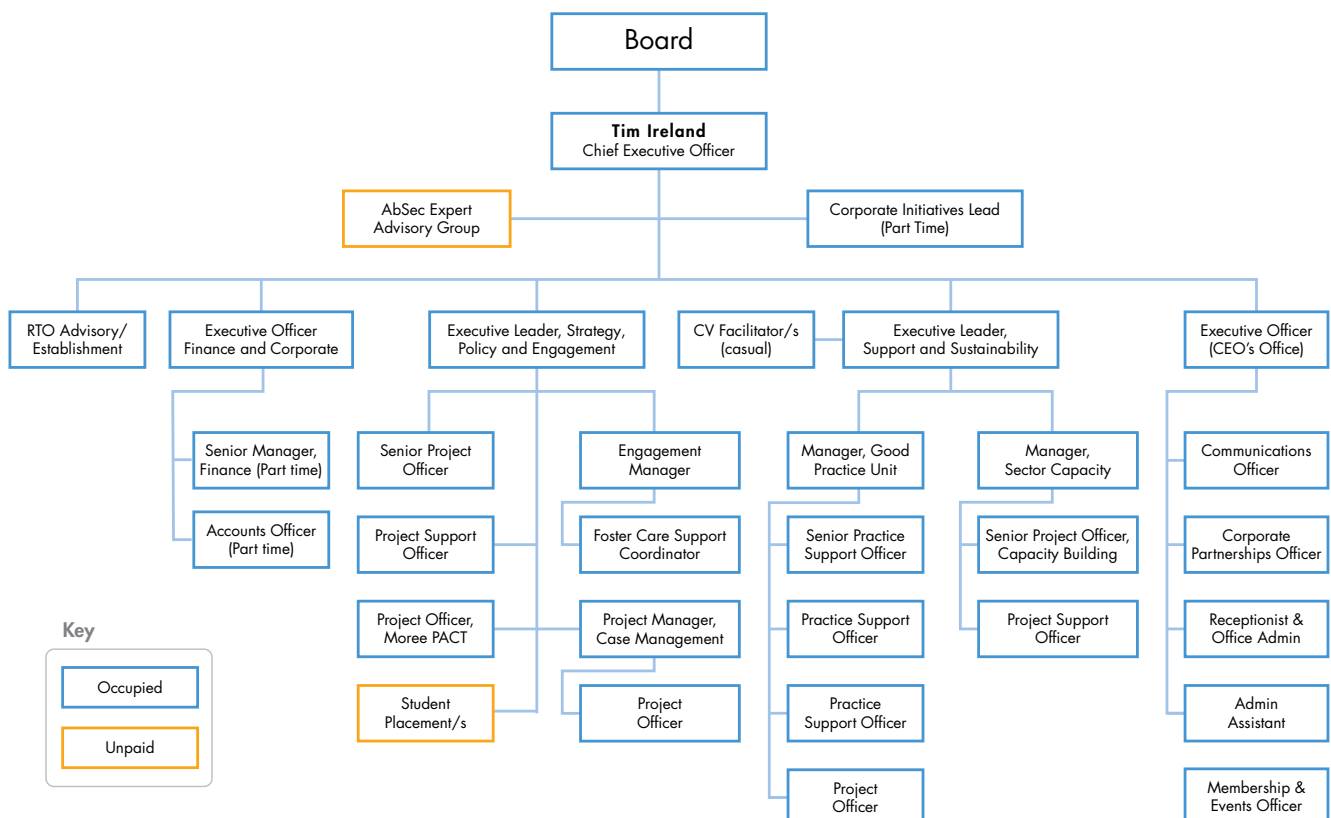
Strategy, Policy and Engagement: This team builds policy perspectives for the Aboriginal child and family sector, along with strategies designed to put those policies into practice. The team engages with Aboriginal people and communities across NSW and aims to advocate on their behalf.

Support and Sustainability: This team works hand-in-hand with the Aboriginal community-controlled sector in NSW, providing holistic support to build effective and sustainable services for Aboriginal people. Our expert staff help to build good practice and strong governance for local Aboriginal organisations across the state.

Corporate Support: This team performs various administrative and executive functions contributing to the strong running of the organisation and our public profile. Duties span across marketing; media and communications; corporate partnerships and fundraising; administration of our membership program; financial and human resource management, and office administration.

In the 2017/2018 financial year we will be introducing a fourth stream to administer our registered training organisation, the AbSec Learning and Development Centre, and to perform other critical functions that complement strengthening our Aboriginal community-controlled child and family sector and our non-Aboriginal partners. Our structure as of 30 June 2017:

Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) 30 June 2017





OUR BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

The AbSec Board governs our organisation, and oversees the implementation of our strategic directions, providing oversight over the delivery of major objectives. Our Board consists of representatives from Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, and each member's organisation must be a member of AbSec. The Board aims to convene on a monthly basis; ensuring effective and good governance in performing its function with eight face-to-face meetings held during the 2016/2017 financial year.

Board members

All members of the AbSec Board as at 30 June 2017 are listed below. During the financial year five members resigned from the board: Michelle Craig, Tina McGhie, Glen Ella, Ernest Lovelock, and Kelly Goldsworthy. We thank them for their contribution to our important work.

- ☉ Dana Clarke, Chairperson of AbSec and Chief Executive Officer, Burrun Dalai Aboriginal Corporation located in Kempsey, Taree and Tamworth
 - ☉ Petrice Manton, Vice Chairperson of AbSec and Chief Executive Officer, Muloobinba located in Newcastle
- ☉ Suzanne Naden, Treasurer of AbSec and Chief Executive Officer, Bungree Aboriginal Association located on the Central Coast
- ☉ Garry Matthews, Secretary of AbSec and Chief Executive Officer, Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Family Community Care Centre Inc (Abcare) located in Coffs Harbour
- ☉ Valda Murray, Ordinary AbSec Board Member and Chairperson, Woomera Aboriginal Corporation located in Albury
- ☉ Craig Ardler, Ordinary AbSec Board Member and Chief Executive Officer, South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation located in Nowra
- ☉ Simone Hudson, Ordinary AbSec Board Member and Chief Executive Officer, Gudjagang Ngara li-dhi Aboriginal Corporation located on the Central Coast
- ☉ Tangerene Ingram, Ordinary AbSec Board Member and Manager, RivMed Family Services Unit located in Wagga Wagga
- ☉ Eric Winch, Ordinary AbSec Board Member and Manager Myimbarr, Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation located in Wollongong

Financials



A MESSAGE FROM THE TREASURER

As the Treasurer, I am pleased to confirm the financial position of the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) for the 2016/2017 financial year. 2016/2017 saw the organisation end the year with total equity of more than \$2.3 million, approximately \$308,000 down from the previous financial year largely due to use of grants received in previous years.

AbSec's strategic objectives establish the organisation fit for the future in being able to identify further revenue for the organisation, and establish strong self-generating programs in future years to benefit Aboriginal children, families, communities and organisations. In perusing this objective AbSec has established Absec Learning and Development Centre (AbSec LDC), which is planned to become fully operational early in 2018 and will generate further revenue to continue core priorities.

The reserves of the organisation provide a sound financial position to pursue its objectives. At year's end, total assets for the organisation were more than \$2.85 million against total liabilities of just over \$0.5 million. The 2016/17 financial year saw the organisation better utilising funds received in previous financial years to achieve its objectives, while still maintaining a strong operating position.

The full Auditor's report complements this Annual Report and our auditor A F Wallis & Co Chartered Accountants have issued an unqualified report, with the management letter provided in this Annual Report. The year ahead is demonstrating the organisation's financial results will track at a satisfactory level, with plans underway to secure the organisation's financial position and diversify revenue streams.

I would like to recognise the hard work and dedication by those involved with AbSec and for their ongoing passion to supporting Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities.

Suzanne Naden

Treasurer



OUR BALANCE SHEET

	ECONOMIC ENTITY		CHIEF ENTITY	
Note	2017	2016	2017	2016
	\$	\$	\$	\$
ASSETS				
CURRENT ASSETS				
Cash Assets 2	1,278,789	1,560,707	1,278,788	1,560,707
Receivables 3	206,364	42,558	206,364	42,558
Other Assets 4	12,871	2,920	12,871	2,920
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	1,498,024	1,606,185	1,498,023	1,606,185
NON-CURRENT ASSETS				
Property, Plant and Equipment 5	1,282,529	1,339,640	1,282,529	1,339,640
Investments 6	–	–	70,000	–
Intangibles 7	70,000	–	–	–
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	1,352,529	1,339,640	1,352,529	1,339,640
TOTAL ASSETS	2,850,553	2,945,825	2,850,552	2,945,825
LIABILITIES				
CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Payables 8	214,102	177,346	214,102	177,346
Current Tax Liabilities 9	98,872	15,176	98,872	15,176
Provisions 10	137,930	117,521	137,930	117,521
Other Liabilities 11	65,572	–	65,572	–
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	516,476	310,043	516,476	310,043
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Provisions 10	6,252	–	6,252	–
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	6,252	–	6,252	–
TOTAL LIABILITIES	522,728	310,043	522,728	310,043
NET ASSETS	2,327,825	2,635,782	2,327,824	2,635,782

Note	ECONOMIC ENTITY		CHIEF ENTITY	
	2017	2016	2017	2016
	\$	\$	\$	\$
MEMBERS' EQUITY				
Opening Balance	2,635,782	3,762,728	2,635,782	3,762,728
Current Year Surplus/(Deficit)	(307,958)	(1,126,946)	(307,958)	(1,126,946)
Share Capital	1	–	–	–

Our Audited Financial Statements (Report) for the year ended 30 June 2017 is available on our website, and upon request. The Report provides an account of the management of the organisation and its subsidiary company, AbSec Learning and Development Centre . It also provides details in respect of the Financial Performance and Financial Position, among other things. The Report demonstrates that AbSec is in good financial health with strong cash position to meet any of its obligations in the future.



Get involved in our work

There are many ways to support the important work being done by AbSec for our Aboriginal children, families and communities, and our organisations across NSW. We appreciate all who make their mark towards our goals, and encourage you to get in touch with us.

SIGN UP TO OUR NEWSLETTER

We share our latest news and ways for you to get involved in our monthly e-newsletter. You can sign up at absec.org.au/newsletter.html.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

As a peak body, AbSec advocates for local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations across NSW, many who do impressive work for their communities with very little funding. Get in touch with Aboriginal organisations in your area to start a discussion about how you can provide meaningful support.

JOIN ABSEC AS A MEMBER

AbSec membership is for individuals, organisations and corporations that are supportive of our goals and dedicated to improving the lives of Aboriginal children, families and communities.

We offer a variety of membership categories to suit different types of organisations, as well as those in the community, such as community people, carers and other interested parties, who share our vision.

Find out more at absec.org.au/membership.html or contact us on **(02) 9559 5299**.

