



# ABORIGINAL CHILD, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CARE STATE SECRETARIAT

LOOKING AFTER  
OUR KIDS

## AbSec News

December 2013

### CEO Report

I cannot believe we are coming to the end of 2013! AbSec has been working hard this year with our carers, member agencies, community and stakeholders to continue to best support Aboriginal Children and Young People.

AbSec in conjunction with Community Services held two information sessions relating to the provision of Aboriginal specific Out-Of-Home Care (OOHC) services within the Sydney Metro Central area. This is in line with the NSW Governments process of transferring out-of-home-care (OOHC) service provision to agencies in the non-government sector. We would encourage those interested to contact our office.

The AbSec Workers Conference was held in early November and it was two days of workshops which were successful and I am sure our conference participants took a lot of information and connections away with them.

Save the date for the next **AbSec Conference which is on 19 and 20 March 2014**, this conference is targeting Carers as well as workers in the Child Protection Sector.

I pleased to announce that AbSec launched the Aboriginal Consultation Guide. The Guide provides a practical framework to assist non-government organisations to work consistently, effectively and sensitively with Aboriginal children, families and communities when providing out-of-home-care. I would like to thank everyone who provided feedback and input into the Guide.

Stay tuned for details of the Aboriginal Consultation Guide workshops to be held in 2014.

On December 3, it was the 21st anniversary of International Day of People with Disability, a dedicated day to place a greater emphasis on the abilities and achievements of people living with disability.

AbSec and ACWA have launched a campaign to raise awareness of the need for more carers for Aboriginal children with disability. One story highlighted carers from AbSec's member agency who are kinship carers for a child with multiple severe disabilities including cerebral palsy. I encourage you to visit the AbSec website to watch the video.

I would like to congratulate the recent graduates of the Diploma Child, Youth and Family Intervention you should be proud of your efforts and achievement. I would also like to thank the staff who participated in the *Essential Skills For Frontline Managers* course, as managers it is great to share our experiences with others, as lessons learnt can help us through difficult situations.

I hope you enjoy the final AbSec News for the year, have a safe, enjoyable break and for those working throughout the holiday season, your commitment is valued.

I look forward to working with you in the New Year, continuing to care for our children and young people, hopefully catch you on one of my regional visits

Regards

Angela Webb  
Chief Executive Officer





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LOOKING AFTER  
OUR KIDS

## Chairpersons Message

What a busy year it's been, and how the months have flown.

Here we are again soon to welcome in 2014. This year has been a year of change, Bill Pritchard resigned, and Angela Webb took over the reins, some of our member agencies changed CEO's, other ceased to be, whilst we welcomed newer members to our ranks. It's hard to keep up with at times.

It was lovely to get together at the workers Conference at Opal Cove in November, AbSec staff did a remarkable job and it was nice to share ideas and support each other in a nurturing way.

Our carer pool has grown remarkably and we welcomed a lot of Community Services carers over to our agencies. We are still delighted and amazed at all the work that these extraordinary people have put into place without a lot of support. We hope you find your time with our agencies as one of being a team member, and being supported in the remarkable work you do.

To Angela and the staff of Absec, Bravo! You have exceeded all our expectations and continue to work extremely hard for our families and kids.

As the Chair I wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and new year.

Health and happiness for 2014.

Merry Christmas

Dana Clarke



## Strong Sector Connected Kids AbSec Workers Conference 2013

On 6-7 November AbSec held its "*Strong Sector Connected Kids*" Workers Conference at Opal Cove Resort, Coffs Harbour. The conference brought together the AbSec board and staff, Out-of-Home Care workers from member and partner agencies.

The conference provided an opportunity for participants to learn, information share and network and included a range of workshops which were informative and interactive.

AbSec had the honour of Mr Steve Kinmond, Deputy Ombudsman as keynote speaker who spoke on "Responding to Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities – Findings from the Ombudsman's audit."

Ms Dana Clarke, Chairperson noted "The conference for new staff was a great opportunity to meet everyone and learn, share and understand that we don't have to reinvent the wheel. For the older staff it was a great networking opportunity and I think a wonderful way to let off some steam after a really busy year."

On the evening of 6 November 2013 a conference dinner was held. Participants were entertained by Terra Firma, an Aboriginal Band based in Regional NSW and features a unique sounds of country, rock, reggae and blues. To find out more about Terra Firma or make inquiries contact Anthony Green via their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Terra-Firma/589210857773902?ref=stream>

Ms Angela Webb, Chief Executive, AbSec confirmed the workshops went a long way to supporting front-line workers and member agencies in ensuring the wellbeing, safety and cultural identity of our Aboriginal children and young people.

Visit the AbSec website for copies of presentations and photos.



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LOOKING AFTER  
OUR KIDS



## Transition NEWS

Fantastic news from the Riverina. RivMed have joined with Anglicare to start an Out of Home Care program in the Wagga Wagga area for Aboriginal kids in statutory care moving from Community Services. RivMed (the Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation) is a leader in the provision of primary health care services and has been moving into child and family services over the last few years, including the Intensive Family Based Support service Ngangaagi.

The OOHC program will be called Wangaay and will start of as a program under Anglicare's accreditation operating from RivMed's premises. Once RivMed have had experience of delivering OOHC services and have become accredited in their own right, they will apply for the funding to take over the Wangaay program.

They estimate that will happen in the next two years and the AbSec transition team are really looking forward to helping them in any way they want.

The AbSec Transition team has commenced work with Muloobinba, in the Hunter Region to support a submission for the agency to become accredited as an out-of-home care provider. Muloobinba currently provide a range of family support services are developing a new out-of-home care service in partnership with The Benevolent Society. The Hunter is one of the highest areas of demand in NSW with over 700 Aboriginal children and young people in care. It is anticipated that the service should achieve provisional accreditation early in 2014 and start taking placements by mid-year. Transition staff are assisting with service and policy development as well as negotiating service arrangements with Community Services.

In line with AbSec's dedication to supporting workforce development in our agencies, the Transition Team hosted managers from six of our member agencies to attend three days of training in the CCWT course "Essential Skills For Frontline Managers". The training emphasised the value of regular supervision as a way of supporting staff and gave participants new approaches to problem solving complex casework issues with their staff.

The group included managers from our OOHC, PACT, IFBS and residential care agencies who, in addition to the formal training, enjoyed the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences as they build their agencies.

Hosting Aboriginal agencies at AbSec enabled the Aboriginal managers to share their unique experiences and allowed them to freely and productively discuss issues that are common across their programs.

The transition team is planning to continue presenting targeted training in a culturally appropriate context to support agency capacity, where possible we will offer the option of accredited training.



## Save the date.....

The bi-annual AbSec Conference Strong Sector, Connected Kids will be held 19 & 20 March 2014 at Opal Cove Resort.

AbSec is calling for sponsorships and exhibitors, for further details visit the AbSec website.





# ABORIGINAL CHILD, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CARE STATE SECRETARIAT

LOOKING AFTER  
OUR KIDS

## Training and Support Team

In 2013 the Training and Support Team were involved in the carer recruitment roadshow as well as focusing later in the year on the Working with Children Check (WWCC) changes and ensuring that information reached carers by holding information sessions within Aboriginal communities across the state.

### ***DIPLOMA CHILD YOUTH AND FAMILY INTERVENTION (customised for Aboriginal OOHK Workers)***

To support vulnerable children and families, the NSW Government is and has been expanding the non-government sector's role in providing out of home care (OOHC). In 2012 the need of Aboriginal OOHK workforce development was identified.

Burrin Dalai, began discussions with North Coast Institute of TAFE regarding the creation of an industry led Diploma course for Aboriginal NGO's to ensure that all case workers have the same level of qualifications and the skills to support the NGO's.

The Diploma pilot began on the 1st July 2012 with students from Kempsey, Taree and Coffs Harbour. The pilot was delivered at Burrin Dalai this included block release and face to face learning.

A Graduation was held at Burrin Dalai on Friday 13 December from which 90% of the students who started the Diploma were the first in the country to have these qualifications.

### **AbSec congratulates the graduates on their hard work, dedication and achievement!**

We have a current intake of students that are due to complete their course in July 2014, these students are from Taree, Coffs Kempsey, Lismore, Inverell and Tamworth services. We have negotiated with the Aboriginal Learning Circle on funding and course roll out details.





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LOOKING AFTER  
OUR KIDS

Training and Support Team continued.

## Koori Knockout

The NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout, known to most as the Koori Knockout, has been held annually since 1970. The 2013 Koori Knockout was held over the October long weekend in Raymond Terrace. The competition included men's, women's, under 17's and under 15's teams representing all areas across NSW. Absec and Burrun Dalai staff held an information stall at the Knockout over the 4 days. It was great to meet carers and potential carers who visited the stall and chatted with staff about recruitment, WWCC and various other issues. Staff were able to assist Carers in applying for their WWCC and some community members were linked with relevant Aboriginal OOHC services in their areas.

Congratulations to the Newcastle Yowies who won the Knockout and will host next years event.

Overall it was a great 4 days of football, and great way to provide information to community about Caring for our Kids.

## Working With Children Check (WWCC)

A Working With Children Check is a prerequisite for anyone in child-related work. It involves a national criminal history check and review of findings of workplace misconduct. The Check is fully portable which means it can be used for any paid or unpaid child-related work in NSW for as long as the worker remains cleared.

AbSec recently attended the WWCC forum which was held by the Office of Children's Guardian (OCG).

OCG believes there is a high level of communication in the community about the WWCC but online verification rates are poor e.g. for paid workers 6800 checks issued and 3293 checks have been verified on line, for volunteers 1882 checks have been issued and 531 have been verified online.

The Office of the Children's Guardian has contacted AbSec to advise that the deadline for WWCC has been extended until 31 March 2014 (previously 31 December 2013).

## Yabun Festival—Survival Day

26 January 2014 @ Victoria Park in Broadway Sydney.

For more details [www.kr00.com.au](http://www.kr00.com.au)







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LOOKING AFTER  
OUR KIDS

## Training and Support Team continued..

### **AbSec Carer Support Groups Christmas parties**

AbSec's Training and Support team travelled down the south coast to celebrate Christmas with AbSec Carer support groups, in Goulburn, Bega, Batemans Bay and Queanbeyan. Lunch was provided for Carers and their children where everyone had a yarn and discussed what things they would like to get out of their support groups in the year to come. Chocolates were given to Carers, as a little way of saying 'Thank You' and acknowledging the commitment from Carers, in providing for our Aboriginal children and young people who need safe and loving homes kids.

The Northwestern Regional Carer Support Workers travelled through the North West Region of NSW to attend final support groups for 2013, and marking the occasion with Christmas Lunches for Carers to enjoy. Christmas Lunches for Carers were held in areas such as Wilcannia, Forbes, Coonamble, Bourke, Murrin Bridge and Narromine.



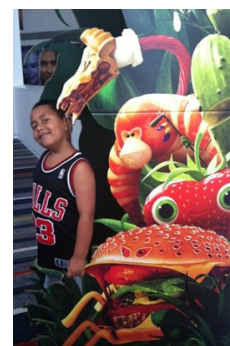
### **Donations**



The North Western Regional Carer Support Workers have received donations of good quality items such as cots, baby car seats, prams, bikes, books, clothing and many more. Our regional staff have been gathering these items during their travels. Recently the workers loaded up a bus and trailer with these donations and have passed these on to Carers in remote communities in the North Western NSW area.

### **Family Movie Day**

AbSec received free family movie tickets from the Leukemia Foundation and passed these on to Carers and their Families to enjoy recently in Parramatta. Families were able to choose from Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2, or the Smurfs 2. This was a great opportunity for our Carers and families to spend quality time together, and to enjoy the film.





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LOOKING AFTER  
OUR KIDS



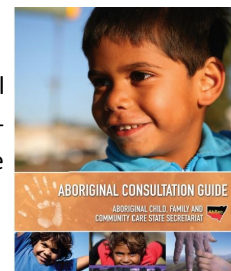
## Keep Them Safe & Communities Team

AbSec's KTS projects including **Intensive Family Based Service (IFBS)** and **Protecting Aboriginal Children Together (PACT)** are entering the final six months of the pilot phase. Early evaluation reports indicate the two projects are positively impacting on reducing the number of Aboriginal children and young people entering the Out of Home Care system and reducing the number of reports of Aboriginal children and young people to the Child Protection system.

The **Family Group Conferencing (FGC)** model continues to be developed. It is planned to commence implementation of the family conferences following stakeholder review and input to the proposed model.

AbSec's **Bringing them Home (BTH)** successfully applied to the Healing Foundation for funding on behalf of the Stolen Generations Council NSW / ACT for two healing workshops. The first was held from the 10th to the 12th of December at Queanbeyan. 25 members of the Stolen Generation attended the workshop. It is planned to hold a second workshop for a further 25 Stolen Generations members in March 2014. The Stolen Generations Council NSW / ACT Annual General Meeting was conducted on Friday 13 December 2013.

The AbSec **Aboriginal Consultation Guide** was launched on 26 November 2013. The launch was well attended and included a number of stakeholders who provided input to the Guide. AbSec plans to distribute the Guide to Child Protection NGOs early in the New Year and is also planning to provide the opportunity to workshop the Guide's contents and templates.



## Saltwater Freshwater Festival

26 January 2014 will be celebrated in Kempsey

For more details [www.saltwaterfreshwater.com.au](http://www.saltwaterfreshwater.com.au)





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LOOKING AFTER  
OUR KIDS

## The Royal Commission into Institutionalised Responses to Child Abuse

Six Royal Commissioners were appointed in January 2013 to investigate Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Commission is examining how institutions can better respond to abuse of children and young people, including how to better protect children from sexual assault, encourage appropriate reporting and responding, eliminate barriers to institutions responding properly to reports, ensure victims get justice and perpetrators are held accountable and how to address trauma suffered by the past and future victims.

The Royal Commission has defined an "institution" as a children's home in the past or current residential care facility for children and young people. But it also means any other "institution", i.e. any private, public, non-government or community organisation involved with children, e.g.: churches, juvenile justice, police, schools, sporting clubs, child care or other services that children or young people are involved in.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are entitled to have their say in this Royal Commission. AbSec would encourage those who have a story to tell, to participate in the Royal Commission. AbSec acknowledges it difficult to tell your story and it you may feel like your experiencing the trauma all over again but telling your story will help the Australian Government find ways to help prevent sexual abuse against children and young people, this could benefit our children and community in the future

### HOW TO TAKE PART?

There are a number of ways to participate in the Royal Commission, including:

1. Issues papers that relate to the Royal Commission are released regularly for comment, Issues Paper Five, Civil Litigation is due by 17th March, 2014. For more information see: [www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/our-work/issues-papers/issues-papers/](http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/our-work/issues-papers/issues-papers/).
2. By telling what happened, if you or someone you know was affected in any way by sexual abuse through an institution, whether personally or professionally. Evidence can be given writing, in person or using a transcript from previous evidence given to a past Inquiry (to avoid having to go over the story again, if you don't want to). The first point of call is to see: [www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/tell-us-your-story](http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/tell-us-your-story)
3. In Public Hearings, Commissioners and the public hear evidence in a formal setting, about child sexual abuse in institutions and failures and successes in preventing abuse. See: [www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/public-hearings/about-public-hearings/](http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/public-hearings/about-public-hearings/)

### What supports are there?

Mainstream organisations were funded to support those who wish to take part in the Commission; see: [www.formerministers.dss.gov.au/12682/more-support-services-for-survivors-of-child-sexual-abuse/](http://www.formerministers.dss.gov.au/12682/more-support-services-for-survivors-of-child-sexual-abuse/) and [www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/support/support-services/](http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/support/support-services/). Legal advice is also available: [www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/support/independent-legal-advice/](http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/support/independent-legal-advice/)

### WHAT IS ABSEC'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE ROYAL COMMISSION?

AbSec as the peak NSW Aboriginal body in child protection and OOHC, is committed to examining the issues arising from the Commission, including system failures and identifying ways to better protect our children and young people. AbSec has been very proactive in engaging with Commissioners, Royal Commission staff including the Aboriginal Engagement Officer for NSW and Commission legal team representatives.

AbSec have submitted responses to Issues papers and met with key NSW Aboriginal Peak organisations. If you have any questions about AbSec involvement or about the Commission, please contact Wendy Hermeston on (02) 9559 5299 or via email at [Wendy.Hermeston@absec.org.au](mailto:Wendy.Hermeston@absec.org.au)







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LOOKING AFTER  
OUR KIDS



## Update from Fostering NSW

by ACWA's Elizabeth Jarrett



### Fostering NSW Disability Video: features Wandiyali Aboriginal kinship carers

This month ACWA released a series of short videos highlighting the need for foster carers of kids with disabilities as part its year-long Fostering NSW campaign to increase the number of foster carers across NSW.

The videos feature the personal stories of three sets of remarkable NSW foster carers, including a remarkable Aboriginal kinship carer Lynda and her partner Bruce who are with Wandiyali agency.

Lynda and Bruce care for Lynda's four grandchildren and the youngest has a disability.

All of the foster carers featured have a unique story to tell but the common thread is how their lives have been enriched through fostering children with disabilities.

The videos show foster carers who provide a range of care options, from long term care to respite (or short-break) care.

All three videos can be viewed on the Fostering NSW You Tube account. To watch Lynda and Bruce's foster care disability journey click here: <http://youtu.be/iHT8hJv9ljY>

Fostering NSW encourages all agencies to use the videos as a resource such as in training of new carers or on your website. Fostering NSW would like to say a big thank you to Wandiyali for linking us up with inspirational carers Lynda and Bruce and to their caseworker Suzi for her support on the day of filming.

### Fostering NSW holds foster care recruitment training for agencies

ACWA held the first of a series of workshops aimed at developing the skills of OOHC agency staff as part of the Fostering NSW Campaign. Twenty-five people from around New South Wales participated in the one-day workshop held in Sydney in November, including two representatives from Aboriginal Medical Service Western Sydney OOH and two from Burrin Dalai Aboriginal Co-orporation. Workshop participants worked together on exercises based on ACWA's Recruiting Foster Carers Manual, which is a practical guide for on-the-ground recruitment strategies. Josh Fergus, lead author of the Manual, with over 10 years experience in the foster care sector, facilitated the workshop and focused on the following core concepts:

Strategic targeting: ensuring agencies are recruiting the carers the agency needs e.g. diversity, complexity

Seamless marketing: ensuring potential carers are directed through recruitment processes in a way that maintains interest and maximizes conversion of enquiry to applicant.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. Many valued the practical emphasis on planning a recruitment strategy from beginning to end as well as receiving new information about harnessing the potential of social media and google search strategies.





# ABORIGINAL CHILD, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CARE STATE SECRETARIAT

LOOKING AFTER  
OUR KIDS



AbSec would like to wish you and  
your families a happy and safe  
Christmas and a healthy and  
prosperous 2014.

