



AbSec News

OCTOBER 2015 ISSUE 20

Work in the child protection and out-of-home care sector has been busy over the last couple of months.

AbSec has been focused on cultural care and cultural support planning, to ensure every Aboriginal child and young person has access to their culture, and the opportunity to form who they are as proud Aboriginal children, and future Aboriginal leaders.

AbSec have been working tirelessly through aspects of the Safe Home for Life Reforms with our Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, ensuring the voice of Aboriginal children, young people and communities are captured as the NSW Government continues implementing these initiatives around guardianship orders and adoptions. Aboriginal communities need to work together in a show of strength to ensure Aboriginal children and young people remain in the care of Aboriginal foster and kinship carers, and stronger families, in Aboriginal communities with the support of Aboriginal agencies.

AbSec has recently been involved in the Joint Protocol for Residential Care and Police, which is being driven by the NSW Ombudsman, the joint protocol is important for Aboriginal children and young people in residential care as they are at increased risk of coming into contact with Police and other parts of the criminal justice system. The Protocol emphasises the importance of flexibility and proportionality in determining the most appropriate response to a young person's behaviour on a case by case basis. This is a new cohesive approach to support young people in residential care.

AbSec is looking forward to continue working closely with our members and communities to ensure Aboriginal children and young people are enriched with culture, strength in identity, belonging to community and proud to always be Aboriginal.

We will maintain focus and commitment to ensuring the best outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people and communities in NSW.

Tim Ireland
Chief Executive Officer



AbSec Announces the Appointment of new Chief Executive Officer

The Appointment of AbSec Chief Executive Officer

As the Chair, I am pleased to announce Mr Tim Ireland as the new Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec).

The Board has appointed Tim as CEO after a national recruitment process that attracted strong candidates.

The Board wanted to ensure they appointed the right person and not rush the process. After an extensive search the Board believe Tim is the person to lead AbSec into the future.

Tim comes to AbSec with a diverse background, and with skills and experience well suited to the role he is to undertake.

The expertise and insight Tim has will enable AbSec to strengthen its support and advocacy for member organisations, and Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities.

Dana Clarke
Chairperson AbSec



MEDIA RELEASE

21 October 2015

AbSec Strategic Plan 2015-2018

The Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) had the great pleasure in releasing its Strategic Plan 2015-2018 last night, focusing on the work we will do as an Aboriginal peak organisation over the coming years.

The AbSec Strategic Plan reaffirms our vision that all Aboriginal children and young people are looked after in safe, thriving Aboriginal families and communities and are raised strong in spirit and identity, with every opportunity for lifelong wellbeing and connection to culture surrounded by holistic supports.

The Strategic Plan will guide the organisations focus in working to achieve our vision. These directions are characterised as our outcome areas:

- 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
- Our Aboriginal sector is strong, sustainable and capable to cater for the needs of our children, families, carers, people with disability and communities and are supported to provide more holistic responses
- 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
- 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

“After a number of consultation sessions with our members, stakeholders and staff, we have an AbSec Strategic Plan 2015-2018 that is broad focusing to achieve more for Aboriginal children, families, carers and communities across NSW, which we are very proud to present” said Mr Tim Ireland, Chief Executive Officer, AbSec.

“This Plan is consistent with the focus that AbSec has had over the last six months, building on its foundations as NSW’s Aboriginal peak organisation in child welfare sector, and it will now guide our work and focus for the years to come.”

To view the AbSec Strategic Plan 2015-2018 visit the AbSec website at www.absec.org.au



MEDIA RELEASE

15 September 2015

Stolen Generations Inquiry

This week the NSW Legislative Councils General Purpose Standing Committee conducted an inquiry into reparations for the Stolen Generation in NSW. The Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) welcomes this inquiry.

AbSec acknowledges the pain and suffering that past Government practices had on members of the Stolen Generation and we are working to ensure that Aboriginal children and young people are not subject to these unacceptable policies.

AbSec calls on the NSW Government to use the information gained from the inquiry to ensure Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care and child protection are not subjected to these disgraceful practices.

“Our children and young people in the states care should be afforded the right to maintain connection to culture and identity with meaningful cultural plans and linkages to Aboriginal communities” said Mr Tim Ireland, A/CEO AbSec.

AbSec believes this inquiry is timely during Foster Care Week as we call for more Aboriginal foster carers to support our children and young people in care “Aboriginal communities supported by Aboriginal Community Controlled agencies, need to take the lead in raising our children and young people in a safe and secure environment.” said Mr Ireland.

In a time when the NSW Government is implementing major legislative reforms around guardianship orders and adoptions, Aboriginal communities need to work together in a show of strength to ensure Aboriginal children and young people remain in the care of Aboriginal foster and kinship carers, and stronger families, in Aboriginal communities with Aboriginal agencies.



MEDIA RELEASE

15 September 2015

Calling for Aboriginal Foster Carers

The Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) congratulates all foster and kinship carers on the role they play in supporting Aboriginal children and young people in care.

This week during Foster Care Week we take the time to acknowledge the very important role carers play in keeping our children and young people safe, raising them strong in culture and identity.

However Aboriginal children and young people are still over-represented in the child protection and out-of-home care system, therefore we need more Aboriginal foster carers supported by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

This week the Kids in Care Cup which is being held on Saturday 19 September at Sid Parrish Park goes to promote the need for Aboriginal carers.

Mr Tim Ireland, A/CEO AbSec said, "AbSec are proud of our affiliation with the Kids in Care Cup, which aims to raise awareness of the need to support Aboriginal children and young people in care and more importantly the need for Aboriginal foster and kinship carers.

Our children and young people in the care system need to be better supported to build a strong connection to culture and identity and AbSec believe Aboriginal out-of-home care agencies and Aboriginal carers are best placed to support this learning and connection.

Our children deserve to be raised in a safe, secure and loving environment; strong in culture."

Coffs Harbour Forum

AbSec members and staff came together on Gumbaynggirr country in Coffs Harbour during July to share knowledge and experience and discuss standing and emerging issues regarding the child protection system and the safety, welfare and wellbeing of our children, families and communities. A range of issues affecting Aboriginal children and young people within the child protection and out-of-home care systems were discussed, as well as challenges faced by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations established to support Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care, including engaging directly with FACS on issues regarding recontracting, capacity building and organisational growth. Common themes emerged, including the need for greater community control of service delivery, greater participation of families and communities in decision making, the strengthening of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles and the importance of ongoing connection to culture for children and young people in OOHC. Members called for greater accountability of FACS and others who are currently making decisions that have a huge impact on the lives of Aboriginal people without appropriate consultation with and participation of Aboriginal people. The importance of hearing from Aboriginal children and young people themselves was also raised, with Julie Welsh introducing AbSec's new "Voice of Aboriginal children" initiative that seeks to support Aboriginal children and young people to have a voice in the system (see this issue).

Recent reforms such as Safe Home for Life were also debated, particularly the use of permanent care orders such as guardianship. While the importance of placement stability was acknowledged by all, there was significant concern about the widespread use of guardianship orders for Aboriginal children, particularly as these processes are not determined by or accountable to Aboriginal families and communities. These orders will see Aboriginal relative and kinship carers denied important practical supports to meet the changing needs of children and young people in out-of-home care, and, at their worst, result in Aboriginal children again being permanently

removed from their families, their communities and their culture, with no safeguards to ensure their safety and wellbeing or the protection of their cultural rights.

From this foundation, discussion turned to the design and structure of an Aboriginal child and family service system, based on community-control and self-determination, that might better meet the needs of Aboriginal children, families and communities, promoting better outcomes and reducing our contact with the statutory child protection systems. Drawing on the co-design work, those present workshopped the beginnings of a framework for an Aboriginal designed and led child and family sector, placing decision making in the hands of communities whilst retaining the strength of our collective voice. In particular, this included strengthening the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, strengthening existing Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and building capacity in communities to produce a sustainable, state-wide network of Aboriginal child and family organisations, developing differentiated policy based on sound, Aboriginal-led research and evaluation, and ensuring that all Aboriginal children in out-of-home care were supported by Aboriginal agencies. This framework will inform AbSec's Sector Plan, and guide our work over the next six years as we seek to make this vision a reality.

AbSec would like to thank all participants who came from around the state to contribute to these important discussions.

We look forward to seeing you all again at our next Agencies' Forum, and at the AbSec Conference in November.



Professor Chandler Seminar

Thursday 24 September 2015 AbSec hosted our first AbSec seminar. Partners from around the sector joined us to hear Professor Michael Chandler (University of British Columbia, Canada) present a talk titled 'Cultural wounds require need cultural healing'.

Professor Chandler is internationally renowned for his research examining the social and emotional wellbeing of Canada's First Nations peoples. Focusing on youth suicide data in Canada's First Nations since the 1990s, Professor Chandler demonstrated that, despite population-wide statistics showing an Indigenous youth suicide epidemic, these "actuarial fictions" obfuscated the lived experience of communities, letting down communities that were struggling to keep their young people safe and well with inadequate supports while simultaneously failing to learn from those communities that had not had a recorded youth suicide in decades. In examining these communities further, Professor Chandler found that communities with most self-determination and control over services such education, health and family services had the lowest rates of youth suicide, with strong self-governance playing a large role. At the individual level, young First Nations Canadians who were most connected to their cultural context, understanding their "cultural continuity" through time, were at the lowest risk of suicide.

Professor Chandler's work clearly demonstrates the importance of Aboriginal community governance and control over important services and ongoing connection to culture, including language maintenance and revival, in the social and emotional wellbeing of our children and young people, our families and communities. This work also emphasises the important role of data and research in empowering our diverse communities to set priorities and establish community-led solutions. Despite emphasising the potential differences between the Canadian and Australian contexts, these broad themes and messages align with the work of AbSec and our member agencies, and reinforce the importance of a community-level focus driven by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and local decision making processes to support our families and communities and promote the social and emotional wellbeing of our children and young people, growing up strong in culture.

AbSec is planning to host a number of future seminars and community discussions to share information and promote discussion of the issues facing Aboriginal children and young people and their families. If you have any suggestions for topics you would like to hear discussed, please contact us at admin@absec.org.au or phone: 02 9559 5299.

Pictured:
Professor Chandler
with AbSec CEO
Tim Ireland and Ab-
Sec staff, SNAICC
staff.



SNAICC Conference



For Our Children
Ngallak Koorlangka

6th SNAICC National Conference
15-17 September 2015, Perth

In September, AbSec sent a strong delegation to the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Conference, hosted on Whadjuk Noongar country in sunny Perth. Over one thousand people from around Australia, representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, government and mainstream organisations gathered to 'share and celebrate stories, inspire action, and listen, learn and grow'.

Amidst powerful and inspiring cultural performances, over 100 presentations were delivered demonstrating the strength and vibrancy of our cultures and the work that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are doing in their communities to strengthen our families in need and support child well-being. AbSec staff contributed to this national discussion, delivering a number of sessions across the conference. AbSec delegates hosted a well-attended 'yarning circle' to discuss the importance of hearing the voices of our children and young people within the child protection and out-of-home care systems. There was considerable interest in AbSec's "Youth Ambassador Program" that seeks to support young Aboriginal people affected by the child protection system to have a voice and advocate for system-wide reform. AbSec's Cultural Support Practice Officer, Michelle Lester, delivered a strong presentation on AbSec's cultural support planning work, emphasizing the need for rigorous cultural plans that engage the child's Aboriginal family and community in protecting the cultural rights of Aboriginal children and young people in care. Michael Higgins (Senior Project Officer, Early Intervention) contributed to a great panel discussion alongside colleagues from the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak regarding the importance of genuine engagement and participation of Aboriginal families and communities and how this can be embedded within the child protection system. The presentation highlighted some of the challenges in ensuring families are supported to make decisions that are in the best interests of their children. All sessions were well attended and demonstrate AbSec's work and leadership in these areas, as well as the expertise and experience of AbSec staff.

As well as learning from each other about what is working well in communities around the country, delegates also took the opportunity to contribute to a national discussion around the needs of our children, families and communities, with particular focus on the ongoing removal of our children from their families, communities, culture and Country; a national crisis for our communities. Collectively, delegates used the gathering to call on the new Turnbull government to increase investment in the early childhood of our children, to establish independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mechanisms to protect the rights of our children, and to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led research to build the evidence base for promoting the wellbeing of our children, all aimed at giving our children the same opportunities as all Australians, growing up safe in the culture with their family and community. There is a considerable amount of work to do to achieve this, however AbSec delegates all returned from Whadjuk Noongar country inspired and re-invigorated for the work ahead.

Click the link to read [The SNAICC Conference Communique](#) recently released.



Pictured: AbSec Board Member Garry Matthews, with AbSec Staff & AbSec CEO Tim Ireland.



Pictured left: Michelle Lester. Right: Michael Higgins

Babana Aboriginal Men's Group

On Friday 28th August 2014, AbSec was represented by the disability team at the Babana Community Assistance Day held on Goat Island. The purpose of the day was for community members to come together and seek information about services within the Sydney Metropolitan area. There were approximately 100 people in attendance.

The morning started off with a cruise on the harbour to Goat Island where participants were invited on a tour of the island and treated to a traditional welcome dance performed by Aboriginal men who are in "The Glen", a rehabilitation centre on the NSW Central Coast.

Stall holders were then invited to speak to the group about their services and what assistance they can give to the community. Noel Walker and Rob Roberts spoke about AbSec's disability project, assisting Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

Other services in attendance included the AMS Redfern, SDRO, ABS, Office of Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. It was a great networking opportunity for AbSec as participants in attendance were from all across NSW and the country.



Pictured above:
AbSec Disability Team:
Rob Roberts, Noel Walker & Brian Edwards

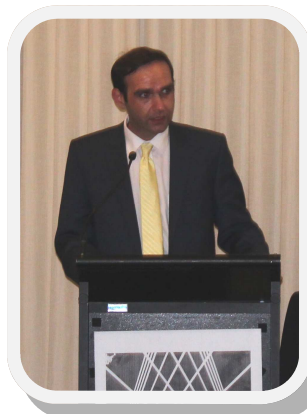
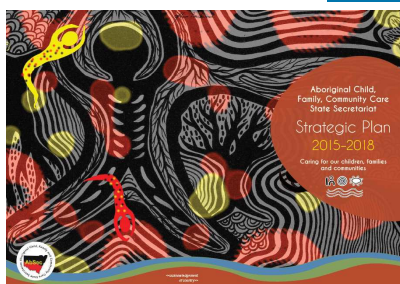
AbSec Strategic Plan Launch

The Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) Strategic Plan 2015-2018 was launched on 21 October 2015 at the Aerial UTS Function Centre.

The Plan will guide the way in which AbSec works to support Aboriginal children, young people, communities, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and stakeholders.

AbSec would like to acknowledge and thank Alison Buchanan for the beautiful artwork for the cover of the plan. The artwork represents 'Love-Respect-Unity' which we believe is at the heart of the work AbSec does with Aboriginal communities.

To view the plan visit the AbSec website www.absec.org.au



Cultural Support Planning & Action Forum

The Hunter, Central Coast and New England Cultural Support Planning and Action Forum was held on Friday 4 September at the Murrook Cultural Centre in Williamstown. Over 100 practitioners and staff in the out of home care (OOHC) sector attended the forum. The aim of the forum was to provide information and strategies on how to better support and maintain Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and young people's cultural identity and cultural connections.

Judge Peter Johnstone, President of the NSW Children's Court, was the keynote speaker. Judge Johnstone and Gemma Slack-Smith (Principal Legal Officer, Aboriginal Legal Service) addressed the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement Principles.

Throughout the day, there were other presentations from Aboriginal community-controlled and CALD OOHC organisations on cultural support planning. These organisations included:

- Abcare – Garry Matthews (CEO)
- AbSec – Bev Sales (Aboriginal Family Group Conferencing Facilitator) and Michelle Lester (Cultural Support Practice Officer)
- Burrin Dalai – Dana Clarke (CEO)
- Muloobinba Aboriginal Corporation – Petrice Manton (CEO)
- Settlement Services International – Ghassan Noujaim (OOHC Manager)
- Wandiyali – Denis Jackson (OOHC Manager)

Ms Bev Sales from AbSec spoke about the process and importance of Family Group Conferencing for Aboriginal children, families. Bev specifically spoke about how AbSec's Family Group Conferencing model can best facilitate shared decision-making to empower our families to work toward setting goals that ensure the safety and wellbeing of children in a culturally appropriate setting.

Ms Michelle Lester from AbSec facilitated a workshop in the afternoon around developing meaningful and accurate Aboriginal cultural support plans. Michelle's presentation covered the impacts of loss of culture, purpose of cultural support plans, provided some examples on guiding principles and what is good practice.

After the presentation, the group was broke into sub groups and workshopped questions on:

- Why cultural support plans are important?
- Who should be participating in the development of cultural support plans?
- What should be included in a cultural support plan?
- What services or organisations can assist you with the development of a cultural support plan?

The questions generated a lot of conversation and each group presented back their findings. Despite the very wet weather, it was a great turn out and hopefully participants took some key learnings which they can then implement into their daily practice and that this will impact positively on the children, young people and families that they work with.



Pictured: AbSec's Bev Sales

Cultural Immersion Program

The University of NSW (UNSW) M. Teach Indigenous Education Program invited AbSec's Julie Welsh to present at a recent cultural Immersion program targeting first year Master of Education student teachers. The creation and content of the program was done in partnership with the local Aboriginal Education Consultancy Group (AECG). The program's aim was to ensure that the 150 student teachers were immersed into a local Aboriginal community to gain knowledge (both theoretical and practical) that would enrich and support their ability to professionally apply strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Julie spoke on the topic 'Working with Aboriginal Communities'. Her presentation aimed to challenge and empower the Master students to engage with local Aboriginal communities, to leave their comfort zones and listen and learn the true history of Australia and understand the challenges Aboriginal people face on a daily basis, particularly our children and young people. A significant part of the presentation also reinforced the importance of culturally strengthening for our children and young people and their cultural rights.

AbSec congratulates UNSW and the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultancy Group (AECG) on such an important program.



Pictured above: Julie Welsh, AbSec



Pictured above: Bigjigal boys



AbSec Youth Ambassador Program

In July 2015 AbSec invited Aboriginal youth from across NSW to apply for its Youth Ambassador Program. This is a new initiative which will provide Aboriginal young people who have had involvement in the child protection or out-of-home care (OOHC) systems to have a voice and to contribute to the policy and reform discussion.

The purpose of the AbSec Youth Ambassador Program is to:

- Celebrate the strength and resilience of our young people, and empower our Ambassadors through a culturally embedded development program
- Motivate and inspire the non-government sector and wider community
- Influence Government and decision-makers
- Speak publicly, with support from AbSec, on experiences and issues impacting Aboriginal young people across NSW

After an extensive interview process and referee checks we have now selected our Ambassadors.

AbSec is excited that the Youth Ambassador Program is becoming a reality as we want to ensure the voice of Aboriginal children and young people in NSW is heard

AbSec recently invited the Youth Ambassadors to an induction and orientation weekend 16-18 October 2015, the induction provided our Ambassadors an opportunity to meet for the first time, with the Welcome to Country performed by Aunty Esther Carroll, a cultural performance by Yaama Boys and a formal welcome by Tim Ireland, AbSec CEO.

Ambassadors participated in cultural activities, heard from a number of guests presenters including

- Andrew Johnson, Advocate for Children and Young People
- Mia Cox, UNICEF

The Ambassadors used the gathering to finalise an Ambassador work and communication plan.

For further information about the program email:

youthvoice@absec.org.au



Congratulations Diploma Graduates

The last block of the Diploma Child, Youth and Family Intervention was delivered in September 2015, with 15 students who are employed within AbSec member agencies completing the Diploma. AbSec would like to congratulate the students on a great achievement.

The Diploma was delivered in partnership with the Aboriginal Learning Circle and NSW TAFE in Sydney over 3 day blocks.



Aboriginal Jobs Together (AJT)

The AJT program was part of the Indigenous Employment Program which had the objective of increasing the employment of Aboriginal people.

The program saw trainees undertake study and on the job training with local non-government organisations.

Unfortunately there were only seven trainees who took part within this cohort with five completing the traineeship.

AbSec would like to congratulate those students who completed their traineeship and wish them well with future endeavors.



On 30 June 2015 the funding AbSec received to auspice the Stolen Generations Council NSW/ACT ceased. Unfortunately due to the changes in the way the Commonwealth Government fund programs (Indigenous Advancement Strategy) AbSec was not successful in gaining funding to support members of the Stolen Generation Council NSW/ACT to access healing forums and cultural workshops.

AbSec is disappointed that such a valuable program in supporting our Elders has been lost..

Should members of the Stolen Generation Council NSW/ACT require assistance please contact 1800 263 881.



NAIDOC Week 2015

AbSec celebrated NAIDOC week with a lunch at our Marrickville office on Thursday 9 July.

Acting CEO Tim Ireland said “It was a success, and was pleasing to have the opportunity for us to open our doors and have a good time – reflecting on the hard work over the past 12 months, and sitting down with some of our supporters from the community”.

We would like to thank all those that came along and celebrated with us!



We all Stand on Sacred Ground:
Learn, Respect & Celebrate

5 – 12 JULY 2015





Shoalhaven Naidoc Day Celebrations

AbSec staff also attended other NAIDOC events around the state



Albury Naidoc Day Celebrations



National Aboriginal & Islander Childrens Day

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) is an annual event celebrated on 4 August each year. This year's Children's Day theme was 'Little People, Big Futures'. NAICD is all about helping our kids stand tall and feel connected and proud in culture.

AbSec hosted an event at Redfern Community Centre and invited four local schools to attend. The event was MC'ed by Luke Carroll and the day was filled with fun cultural activities which provided an opportunity for the kids to participate in.

It was wonderful to have sixty students attend from the following schools:

- Darlington Public School
- Marrickville Public School
- Dulwich Hill Public School
- Alexandria Park Community School

There were four facilitated cultural workshops. These workshops were:

- Canvas painting with Michelle Blakeney
- Painting boomerangs and beading station with AbSec staff
- Story Telling with Luke Carroll
- Koori Games with AbSec staff.

Aunty Ester Carroll did a Welcome to Country, followed by the Aboriginal dance group the Yaama Boys. The Yaama Boys performed traditional Aboriginal dances and then taught the children a dance which they then performed for everyone.

After the dancing, four Canterbury Girls High School students beautifully sang two songs.

The kids loved Luke Carroll and they were very excited to meet a deadly Koori celebrity! Michelle Blakeney helped the students facilitate 5 pieces of wonderful artwork on the day.

"Thank you to you and all your team for a wonderful day the kids and I had such an amazing time. They couldn't stop talking about it. We can't wait for next year." – Dulwich Hill Public School

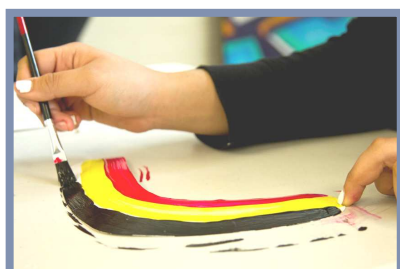
"Thank you to the generous and talented people from AbSec for helping our kids (and a few lucky teachers) celebrate in style at Redfern Community Centre" – Marrickville West Public School

AbSec would like to thank everyone who helped make the day a huge success.

We would also like to thank Glen Lockitch for his photos capturing the day.



National Aboriginal & Islander Childrens Day



Foster Care Week Picnic Day



The **Annual Foster Care Week Picnic Day** was celebrated on **Sunday 13 September, 2015** in Western Sydney. Around 1200 carers and their families attended the event which launched Foster Care Week 2015. This year's theme 'Growing Together' highlighting how agencies value foster carers as part of a team. The Picnic Day is a way of acknowledging the commitment that Carers have for children and young people in care.

Chris Tobin, Welcomed us all to the land of the Darug. Chris has been a regular supporter of the Picnic Day over the years.

This year the picnic day was officially opened by the Hon. Brad Hazzard MP, Minister for Family and Community Services.



There were many activities including the Western Sydney Wanderers kick the ball clinic, and Western Sydney University's Rocket launchers, where children and young people could also take home their own aeroplane. Thanks to all those carers who came along to the AbSec stall to say hello and yarn with AbSec Staff members.

Overall it was a fun day for the family, where carers and their families could get together and enjoy quality time together.

Pictured left: Vicki Barton, AbSec



Child Protection week was held 6—12 September 2015. National Child Protection Week invites all Australians to play their part to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. "Protecting children is everyone's business."

AbSec Conference 2015 Guest Presenters

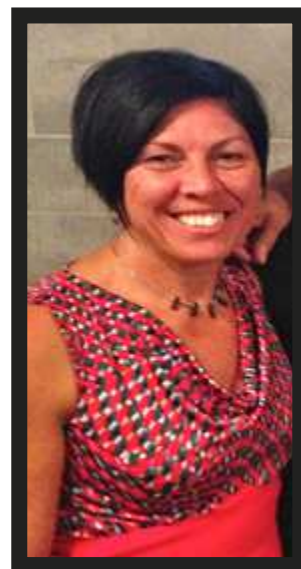
The Vibrant Sector, Capable Workers, Stronger Kids - supporting Aboriginal children and young people to have the best possible future conference is fast approaching.

AbSec is pleased to have Dr Moana Eruera and Dr Leland A Ruwhiu presenting to participants on Wednesday 25 November regarding New Zealand's Early Intervention and Family Support models.

Dr Moana Eruera

PhD (Indigenous Studies), M. Phil (Social Work), Post Grad Dip (Social Policy & Social Work), B.A (Māori), Registered Social Worker NZ, MANZASW, Tangata Whenua Social Worker Association (TWASWA)

He aha te mea nui o tēnei ao ... he tangata, he tangata, he tangata. What is the greatest gift of all ... it is people! Of Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Ruanui and Ngāti Rangiwewehi tribal descent. Eldest of 3 sisters, Mother of 2 boys (and many other family members she cares for) and active member of her extended family and tribe. More than 25 years experience in social and community work including family violence prevention and research projects with her Ngāpuhi tribe. Her working career and vision has been spent committed to strengthening family, child safety and wellbeing, reclaiming and application of indigenous frameworks and practices in social and community work, social justice, human rights and the development of Māori and indigenous people.



Dr Leland A Ruwhiu

PhD (Social Policy & Social Work), BSW Hons (Social Policy & Social Work), Registered Social Worker NZ, MANZASW, Tangata Whenua Social Worker Association (TWSWA).



‘Ko taku rereke ko taku turangawaewae – Where I place my heels that where I’ll make my stand’; Of Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu & Ngāi Tahu ki Mohaka iwi/Nations, I am the eldest of eight brothers, two sisters; husband to a Queensland/Wairarapa beauty – Nicky Haeata-Ruwhiu. We are proud parents of one daughter five sons; Koro/Nana (grandparents) of five mokopuna (grandchildren) and embedded in our whakapapa (genealogy/significant places of engagement). I stand before you as an Indigenous/Tane (male – Whatukura) Māori/Tangata Whenua social and community worker, poet, theorist, writer, researcher, lecturer, advisor, trainer, mentor on all aspects of Whānau ora (wellbeing of families); and continue to contribute to Whānau violence prevention; Whānau development and best principled practice in working with mokopuna and whānau Māori.

KIDS IN CARE CUP 2015

The Illawarra Titans Aboriginal Rugby League Football Club host of "The Kids in Care Cup" 2015 were overwhelmed with the strong 3000+ crowd that turn out on the day! "The day was nothing short of a huge success" said Rod Broad, captain of the Illawarra Titans and "the day proved itself to build on the call to action of more Carers for Aboriginal Kids in statutory care in NSW", said Acting CEO Tim Ireland. "Each year the event grows in recognition, with communities participating in local media commitments sharing the call to action", Mr Ireland went on to say.

The event attracted players eager to represent with pride their home towns in this state wide competition! Last year's winners the Dalai Dreamers from Kempsey were triumphant over the Baryulgil Descendant's Devils 22-4 in a high quality grand final match up! The event also featured 4 women's teams from the Illawarra, Campbelltown, Kempsey and Far South Coast playing a round robin. There were also 14 youth teams playing a round robin from Under 7's through to Under 17's. This year the event also included a "services alley" where a range of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal services with a Child and Family focus were able to connect with the attendees.

A documentary has been commissioned jointly by AbSec and ACWA and will feature the event. The documentary will be available as a recruitment tool for Foster Carers and features the stories of carers from the Kempsey Aboriginal community. The world premiere will take place at the AbSec Conference in Coffs Harbour early November and will later feature on Networks and Film Festivals both domestically and abroad!

The event would never take place without the generous support from AbSec, ACWA, Fostering NSW, Link Up NSW/ACT and the NSW Government, Family and Community Services.



2015 winners Dalai Dreamers

KIDS IN CARE CUP 2015



Keeping Kin Connected Nowra



The Keeping Kin Connected Event was held at Nowra Showground on Thursday 24 September 2015 hosted by FACS and various OOHHC agencies.

The day was for Aboriginal children in care and their Carers to connect with each other, their community and their culture.

Aunty Grace Crossley Welcomed everyone to Country and dancers from Vincentia High School performed. AbSec attended along with South Coast AMS OOHHC Agency and Myimbarr.

Footballer Dylan Farrell (pictured bottom left) drew out lucky door prizes for kids, who received an autographed football.

Members of NSW Police were also there to support the event.



Pictured above: Aunty Grace with AbSec staff Vicki Barton & Rod Broad

NCOSS Sydney Festival for Civil Society

On 14 October 2015, the NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) held their Sydney Festival for Civil Society. It was also the day in which the 1 in 7 campaign was launched.

We acknowledge that in NSW, 13.8 percent of children under the age of 15 are experiencing poverty—a rate higher than any other mainland state. Almost 1 in 7 children live in households below the poverty line.

This is especially reflective of Aboriginal communities and that is why AbSec supports the 1 in 7 campaign.



Legal Aid NSW Annual Family Law Conference



On 16 October 2015, AbSec presented at the Legal Aid NSW Annual Family Law Conference on the importance of culture for Aboriginal children and young people.

The presentation facilitated by Michelle Lester, Cultural Support Practice Officer stressed to participants that the process of developing and implementing cultural plans and how they must be respected and acknowledged as significant and meaningful work that will keep Aboriginal children and young people strong in culture and connected to family, community and Country.

AbSec are wanting meaningful cultural plans for Aboriginal children and young people that will give them a strong sense of culture and identity.

Pictured left: Michelle Lester.



ABORIGINAL CARERS NEEDED

**Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC need
Aboriginal foster/kinship carers**

Aboriginal foster carers play a vital role in the lives of Aboriginal kids.
By giving these children safe,
caring homes, you'll help ensure their wellbeing and change their lives for
the better.

An Aboriginal child's cultural identity is an important part of who they
are. Children who are strong in their culture have higher self-esteem,
confidence and expectations of what they can achieve.

If you know of someone that you think would make a great foster carer,
please let them know and encourage them to contact us for further
information **AbSec on 1800 888 698**





Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is looking into the advocacy and support and therapeutic treatment needs of adult and child survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. In both public hearings and private sessions, the Commission has heard about a range of difficulties victims and survivors face when seeking support and therapeutic treatment.

Advocacy and support and therapeutic treatment includes a range of services victims and survivors need to address the impact of child sexual abuse and trauma, to help them heal and lead a fulfilling and meaningful life.

It is important for the Commission to hear what services victims and survivors need, what was useful to help them survive the abuse and how service can better support survivors. Survivors, victims and service providers, are encouraged to have their say.

There are different ways you can respond including online submissions and email.

Final recommendations on advocacy and support and therapeutic services will be contained in the Royal Commission's final report in 2017.

For more information go to www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au; email advocacyandsupport@childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

GPO Box 5283 Sydney NSW 2001 Australia T 1800 099 340 W childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

FACS Care leavers Line

The FACS Care leavers' Line 1800 994 686 commenced operation on 1 July 2015. The service is a new initiative in providing a contact point and source of information for young people who have transitioned from out-of-home care.

Minister Brad Hazzard has reinforced his commitment to strengthen the services available to young people as they progress through the care system and move towards independence.

On 1 July 2015, the Minister established the FACS Care leavers Line which is available Monday to Friday (9am-4:30pm) to answer queries and provide information. Young people who are moving towards independence, or those who have already left care, can contact this telephone line for advice and information.

ARE YOU LEAVING CARE?

Like other young people who have left their family homes, if you have been in care you need ongoing support to help you adjust to independent living.

Family and Community Services or your non-government organization is not only responsible for you while you're in care, but also for developing 'leaving care' or 'after care' plans.

If you have questions about leaving care, get in touch with your caseworker or the FACS Care leavers Line on 1800 994 686 or visit: http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docs_menu/parents_carers_and_families/for_young_people/are_you_in_care/are_you_leaving_care.html

AFTER CARE SUPPORT

'After care' is a term used to describe a variety of services and supports that may be available to young people between the ages of 15 to 25 years after they formally leave care.

Family and Community Services (FACS) or your non-government organization will discuss with you the kinds of after care support you would like, and will recommend services based on your wishes and an assessment of your individual circumstances.

Post Care Financial Report

The NSW Government has introduced a new payment to foster, relative and kinship carers to help young people in out of home care complete secondary education after they turn 18.

Minister for Family and Community Services Brad Hazzard and Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli announced the new payment - the Post Care Education Support Allowance – as part of Foster Care Week, which began on Sunday.

“Access to a quality education is important for every young person to succeed in life -I want to see young people in out of home care getting the same opportunities and support as young people in the wider community,” Mr Hazzard said.

“A big part of this is providing stability - this policy means for the first time all young people living in out of home care will be supported to continue living with their carer so they can complete their secondary studies after they turn 18.”

Minister Piccoli welcomed the initiative saying the new payments will help ensure stability for students in their final years of high school.

“The HSC can be a challenging milestone for any student but it can be particularly tough for those in out of home care,” Mr Piccoli said.

“Offering stability as these students transition from school to work or higher education is essential to supporting these young people reach their full potential.”

Principal of Merrylands High School Lila Mularczyk said she was heartened by the initiative.

“Many young people in care need longer to complete their schooling than their peers and often experience fewer opportunities to go on to higher education and employment,” Ms Mularczyk.

“I am really heartened to see these young people, who have often faced many difficulties, getting much-needed support to help them reach their potential.”

For further information go to www.facs.nsw.gov.au/postcarefinancialsupport

AbSec Sector and Workers Conference 2015

Vibrant Sector, Capable Workers, Stronger Kids

Supporting Aboriginal children and young people to have the best possible future

The Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) will be hosting the Workers and Sector Conference “*Vibrant Sector, Capable Workers, Stronger Kids – Supporting Aboriginal children and young people to have the best possible future*” conference at Opal Cove Resort in Coffs Harbour from Tuesday 24th – Thursday 26th November.

The first two days will be a Workers’ Conference which will be targeted to AbSec’s Aboriginal member agency workers who are working directly with Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities. The themes that will be discussed are Early Intervention Good Practice, Out of Home Care Good Practice and Reforms in Practice.

The third and final day will be a Sector Conference which is open to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners committed to good practice for Aboriginal children, young people and families. The themes that will be discussed are Cultural Support in Practice, the Voice of Aboriginal Children and Young People and Innovative Practices.

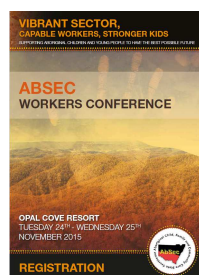
The conference will consist of several keynote and guest speakers; Mr Steve Kinmond (NSW Ombudsman), Dr Fiona Arney (University of South Australia), Dr Leland Ruwhiu and Dr Moana Eruera (Child, Youth and Family Services, New Zealand), Ms Kerryn Boland (Office of the Children’s Guardian), Ms Kirsten Gray, Mr Michael Coutts-Trotter (Department of Family and Community Services NSW) and Ms Natalie Lewis (Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak).

Participants can expect to see some great entertainment throughout the conference including performances from local schools Kulai Preschool and Orara High School in the opening mornings of each conference. In the evenings of Tuesday and Wednesday we’ll have our conference dinners with regional NSW band *Terra Firma* performing on the first evening and Comedian *Andy Saunders* performing the second evening.

At the close of Thursday afternoon, there will be a cocktail function from 5pm in Opal Cove Resort’s ‘Horizons Bar and Restaurant’ which guests should book to secure their place.

AbSec is still calling for registrations and sponsorship for the conferences.

Registrations are currently open, and all registrations to close Tuesday 17th November 2015. To register, visit www.absec.org.au and head to the conference online registration page, alternatively you may email jessie.longbottom@absec.org.au to request a paper registration and further information.





AbSec facebook

Don't forget AbSec is on facebook so follow us to stay informed of events, news and community information or if you want to contact us, feel free!



Contact AbSec

Phone: 02 9559 5299

Email: admin@absec.org.au