

*Sharon Buchanan*

Aboriginal Child,  
Family and Community Care  
State Secretariat

# Strategic Plan 2015–2018

Caring for our  
children, families and  
communities



AbSec would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land in which we work, and pay our respect to Elders past and present. AbSec acknowledges the Stolen Generation whom never came home



## Message from the Board

It is my pleasure to present the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) Strategic Plan for 2015–2018. This plan represents a change that builds on AbSec's rich history and foundations, to one that enables us as the NSW Aboriginal peak body to continue our good work.

Over the years, AbSec has enhanced its focus into the broader domain of holistic Aboriginal child and family supports, inclusive of building the mechanisms needed to better support all Aboriginal people in our community. This does not mean our focus on Aboriginal children, young people, carers and families has wavered, but rather recognises the need to look at the broader impacts on our families brought about by a need for a strong Aboriginal sector capable to meet emerging and changing demands.

As a representative of the Board of AbSec, I am pleased that we are setting a strong strategic foundation for AbSec into the future. This includes our commitment to maintain our support for the existing Aboriginal sector, but recognises the broader drivers we need to focus on as a peak body—that being working in partnership to reduce the rate of Aboriginal children and young people in care, building strong Aboriginal families, and ensuring culture is embedded in everything we do.

In every effort we make towards our vision, we consider this a positive step to enriching the lives of our next generation. I would like to acknowledge the continued commitment of my fellow Board members, member agencies, AbSec staff and partners in striving for better outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities across NSW.

**Dana Clarke**  
Chairperson, AbSec Board

## Message from Staff

At AbSec, our focus remains wholly on providing better outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people, ensuring strong Aboriginal families, connection to their communities and providing the opportunity to ensure the tools addressing impacts on families broadly are available. This focus is a dedication and commitment to ensuring culture is embedded in everything we do as an Aboriginal peak body, whether that be on the local, state, national or international level.

I am pleased to see an all-encompassing Strategic Plan that focuses on providing more holistic responses for Aboriginal children, families and communities. A plan that will aim to work with our partners to reduce instances of out of home care, where possible, while also supporting stronger families and communities to be a part of the solutions we strive for our children into the future.

We are committed to the principles this plan identifies, as they will guide us in every facet of our work. Additionally, we are committed to the vision and objectives of this plan, recognising that this is our focus. We are ultimately committed to ensuring that our Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities are better supported in the future, with rich cultural safeguards and surrounded by a robust Aboriginal safety-net across NSW.

On behalf of the team at AbSec, and sharing the sentiments of the Board, I am pleased with the directions and priorities identified in this plan, knowing that it was a comprehensive effort to draw this information together with the involvement of all our stakeholders. We look forward to sharing our successes as we commence implementing this plan, and striving for a better future for our Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities.

**Tim Ireland**  
Chief Executive Officer, AbSec

## Our Vision

Our vision is 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

## Our Objectives

Work towards achieving self-determination for all 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

## Principles that guide us

- Acknowledgement and respect** — We will 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 action
- Professionalism and integrity** — We will 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 will 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 will 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 will remain committed to our people in everything we do, ensuring our actions are clear and promoted at every opportunity

## Our Strategic Directions

AbSec's Strategic Plan 2015–2018 is defined under four Strategic Directions that 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



**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

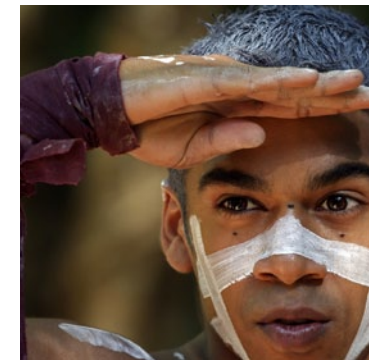
- 1 Establish ongoing mechanisms for Aboriginal children and young people to capture their voices, influence decision making and develop strong networks**
  - i. Establish an Aboriginal Youth Advisory and Ambassador program that empowers Aboriginal children and young people to have a say about their experiences and provides the opportunity to influence change
  - ii. Implement initiatives for Aboriginal children and young people to encourage participation to build strong cultural and community connections, and overcome barriers to success
  - iii. Produce information and resources on the thoughts of Aboriginal children and young people, in an appropriate way, to showcase their desires and aspirations as the next generation of leaders for our communities
- 2 Develop mechanisms for families and carers, focused on connection and participation to encourage thriving networks, resilience and addressing systemic issues**
  - i. Maintain and enhance the Foster Carer Support Line, and report on systemic issues to improve carer engagement and capacity building
  - ii. Implement carer engagement activities to ensure strong networks of carers, as well as to build resilience and provide opportunities for promoting formal caring to Aboriginal communities
  - iii. Participate and lead Aboriginal culturally responsive and connected family initiatives to promote positive and thriving parenting for Aboriginal children and young people
- 3 Provide avenues for engaging on topics related to child protection and out of home care within communities to provide understanding and support for change**
  - i. Lead community education and awareness initiatives to draw attention to the impacts of child protection and out of home care in Aboriginal communities, building a collective community response to address systemic concerns
  - ii. Gather community input regularly to shape strategic initiatives that AbSec is involved with, ensuring community expectations are understood and articulated to ensure results

**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 are supported to provide more holistic responses

- 1 Represent the interests of the Aboriginal sector to partners and other stakeholders**
  - i. Consolidate systemic issues and advocate for quality safeguards for a strong Aboriginal sector
  - ii. Engage regularly with the sector to positions issues and directions ensuring a stronger sector is maintained for Aboriginal children, young people, families, carers, people with disability and communities
- 2 Provide meaningful support to the Aboriginal sector in transitioning and changing environments for Aboriginal children, young people, families, people with disability and communities**
  - i. Implement activities and systems to monitor and maintain quality service delivery, ensuring good governance, cultural responsiveness, meeting standards and quality frameworks, and embeds innovative thinking embedded into practice
  - ii. Deliver sector support initiatives to maintain positive approaches for achieving outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people, families, people with disability and communities
- 3 Create and maintain a cultural safety-net of Aboriginal agencies across NSW to cater for the needs of Aboriginal children, young people, families, people with disability and communities in a holistic support system**
  - i. Implement strategies to grow the sector, respond to change, and diversify service models to deliver in emerging environments with a focus on holistic supports
  - ii. Model effective service delivery to be focused on holistic child and family approaches in Aboriginal communities
- 4 Increase the number of Aboriginal people employed within our sector to be capable, strong and resilient for delivering into the future**
  - i. Implement an Aboriginal workforce and industry development strategy for the Aboriginal sector, identifying succession and resilience as core priorities

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

- 1 Establish a strong network with non-Aboriginal services to foster the interests of Aboriginal children, young people and families being connected to culture and community**
  - i. Work towards a memorandum of understanding with key non-Aboriginal agencies servicing Aboriginal communities, focusing on good cultural practice and support, and options for increasing Aboriginal community controlled service delivery in a planned way
  - ii. Conduct training and engagement with non-Aboriginal organisations and carers to raise awareness of issues impacting Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities
  - iii. Promote Aboriginal culturally responsive good practice models of engaging and working with Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities
- 2 Identify innovative projects and initiatives in partnership with the corporate sector to provide positive outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people, families, carers, people with disability and communities**
  - i. Establish a collective impact model focused on core strategic outcomes
  - ii. Work with partners to embed cultural practice and understanding
- 3 Influence the broader political environment, and associated reform agendas, through strong engagement in whole of sector activities, ensuring the our interests and that of our stakeholders are represented**
  - i. Develop and continually promote papers identifying good practice in Aboriginal communities and supporting Aboriginal children, young people, families, carers and people with disability
  - ii. Promote issues impacting the Aboriginal sector through strategic communications to effectively raise the profile and identify positive solutions



**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

- 1 Aboriginal culture is embedded in everything we do as an organisation and for our stakeholders**
  - i. Implement and continually promote an Aboriginal cultural framework within the organisation and to our stakeholders
- 2 Improve systems and processes to ensure contemporary approaches against industry benchmarks**
  - i. Implement robust systems and processes that respond to external demands and internal drivers to successfully achieve within a good government environment
  - ii. Establish and continually review policies and procedures that are centred on Aboriginal children, young people, families, carers, people with disability and communities, embedding culture within each element
  - iii. Develop internal reporting and risk mechanisms that allow for regular health checks of the organisation and our sector, ensuring a more targeted approach to support and development
- 3 Foster a learning and development culture to support implementation of strategic initiatives**
  - i. Develop and implement an organisation workforce development strategy that is appropriately resourced to support staff skill and career development
- 4 Build communications and system change capabilities as the leading Aboriginal peak organisation in this sector**
  - i. Engage regularly with stakeholders and media outlets to promote the organisation's business, focus and achievements
  - ii. Implement system change strategies internally and with vested stakeholders to lead and design holistic models of support
  - iii. Establish a research program that enables focus on critical issues impacting stakeholders
- 5 Embed a culture of planning and performance to systematically drive better outcomes**
  - i. Implement annual resourcing, risk management and business planning to improve performance tracking, and alignment and reporting on strategic plans and funded initiatives.



# Delivering our plan

AbSec’s Strategic Plan represents an approach to managing the organisation’s affairs, and sets the organisation’s focus on embedding a culture of planning and performance. As such, the Strategic Plan will be complemented by Annual Business Plans that articulate how AbSec aims to achieve each of the priorities listed under the four directions.

Annual Business Plans aim to identify the core activities, risks and resources associated with achieving the organisations priorities in a 12-month timeframe, allowing for continual review and adjustment. It is envisaged that Annual Business Plans will identify and leverage other complementary activities that contribute ultimately to AbSec’s vision for Aboriginal children, young people, families, carers, people with disability and communities. AbSec aims to work to the following cycle in delivering our plan:



Our approach to implementation allows for each quarterly review point to adjust and incorporate changes that require the organisation’s focus on other complementary initiatives. This model allows the organisation to be flexible and agile to emerging demands and interest, ensuring alignment with AbSec’s objectives and vision.

# Monitoring our effort

Our performance will be guided by ten headline indicators:

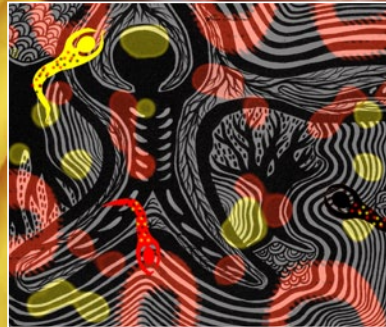
1. Number of participants involved in AbSec activities and expressing satisfaction
2. Number of activities undertaken by AbSec with target groups and information delivered each year
3. Number of member agencies supported by AbSec and information provided each year
4. Percent of Aboriginal workers participating in AbSec-led training and development
5. Number of new Aboriginal agencies engaged in the sector
6. Number of partners engaged and supporting positive outcomes for Aboriginal people
7. Number of partners supporting AbSec in ensuring positive cultural connections and holistic supports
8. Number of activities undertaken to influence change for our sector and communities
9. Increase of 20% in income to achieve results
10. Less than 20% turnover of staff over the life of the plan

Within these headline indicators, Annual Business Plans will establish complementary targets to effectively monitor and improve performance. Our aim is to set a clear benchmark through these targets and headline indicators for future growth and sustainability of AbSec.



### AbSec Contact Information

**Phone:** (02) 9559 5299  
**Toll free:** 1800 888 698  
**Address:** 21 Carrington Road, Marrickville NSW 2204  
**Postal:** PO Box 604, Marrickville NSW 1475  
**Email:** admin@absec.org.au  
**Website:** www.absec.org.au



Cover image by  
Alison Buchanan  
  
‘Love – Respect – Unity’  
  
*Love is all around us,  
Respect and you will be  
respected and Unite for a  
better world for all children.*  
  
Commissioned original  
artwork 21 July 2015