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2021

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NEXT EDITION

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AASW Members whose articles are published in *Social Work Focus* can claim time spent to research and prepare them towards CPD requirements, specifically Category 3.

EDITORS

Angela Yin

Marketing and Communications Officer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The AASW respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians, and pays its respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Join us on social media:



National President's Report

As I write this, we are fast heading towards the end of the year. We celebrated the Association's 75th anniversary on 7 September, and as part of the occasion we are launching the inaugural National Excellence Awards.

These Awards will acknowledge social workers who exemplify the best of the profession's values, achievements and accomplishments. We know our members are doing ground-breaking and vital work with vulnerable Australians. We are at the forefront of addressing society's most pressing issues. Now is the time to nominate yourself or a colleague in the profession's most prestigious awards.

These are the categories:

- Social Worker of the Year
- Social Work Researcher of the Year
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Social Worker of the Year
- Social Work Student of the Year.

You must be a member to eligible for an Award. So if you are doing great work, but not a member, now is the time to join. If you know a potentially award-winning social worker who is not a member, get them to join the Association. The Award winners will be announced at the 26th Asia-Pacific Regional Social Work Conference 2021 on Friday, 12 November 2021. This is your chance to shine in front of an international audience, so take this opportunity.

As this is the annual Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander edition of Social Work Focus, I especially want to encourage First Nations members to nominate.

I would like to commend members Angela Fredericks and Bronwyn Dendle for their outstanding work in promoting the human rights of Nades, Priya and their two daughters from Biloela and their campaign to have the government grant them refugee status so they can return. If you haven't seen it, do watch the Australian Story episode on ABC iView. Get involved in the campaign at the website: <https://www.hometobilo.com/>

Our Senior Social Policy Adviser Angela Scarfe will be featuring Angela and Bronwyn in an upcoming episode of our podcast Social Work People. Look out for it!

I look forward to seeing you all at the 26th Asia-Pacific Regional Social Work Conference 2021 on 11-13 November. The program summary was recently published, announcing the various streams, all relating to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Check it out, so you can see what you would like to attend over the two and a half days. I am certainly looking forward to seeing the best of social work in our region. It will be an exciting, interactive and immersive event with digital exhibitions and visually appealing presentations. Register now and I will see you there!

Lastly, the media's attention has recently turned to mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the face of extended lockdowns, and border

closures. It has, and continues to be, a bruising experience. There is a widening gap between those who are well off and those who are not. Many of us are grappling with grief, loss, and social isolation. In that context, we honour the work of social workers in the mental health space, and in the health system.

As we bear witness to so much pain, we understand too, that our profession is an important part of civil society. We will continue to speak truth to power, and advocate both for our members and the communities we serve.

Vittorio Cintio

Vittorio Cintio

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VITTORIO CINTIO

AASW National President

Social work and Reconciliation

It is with great pleasure that we produce the annual edition of *Social Work Focus* with the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander theme, which is one of our commitments under our Reconciliation Action Plan 2020-2022.

It is always an exciting edition to produce in collaboration with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander members. It is a pleasure to introduce Professor Sue Green, who was recently re-elected Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Director

As I write to you now, more than half the country is in lockdown because of the highly contagious Delta variant of COVID-19. We have fostered positive reinforcement amongst the AASW staff to encourage vaccination. Social workers in public-facing roles will likely have been vaccinated already. I encourage all social workers to be vaccinated if you can.

Unfortunately, this highly contagious variant has entered Aboriginal communities, most notably in Wilcannia in western New South Wales. I'm sure you will join me in supporting Sue Green's comments about the structural neglect and racism against Aboriginal people who live on Country, increasing

their vulnerability to COVID-19 with 12 per cent of the population infected. Sue has appeared on the Strong Voices radio program with Phillipe Perez in Alice Springs (<https://www.caama.com.au/category/strong-voices/>) and Sky TV's Afternoon Agenda with Danica de Giorgio to discuss the AASW's position on Wilcannia. You can read our full position statement in this edition.

As usual, there is plenty happening at AASW, with the 26th Asia-Pacific Social Work Conference 2021 now taking registrations, poster presentations and offering scholarships. We are honoured to have Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Amina J. Mohammed, Professor Jioji Ravulo, Professor and Chair of Social Work and Policy Studies at The University of Sydney and former Deputy Premier of Victoria Professor John Thwaites AM, Chair of the Monash Sustainable Development Institute and ClimateWorks Australia as confirmed speakers at the upcoming Conference.

I am sure the theme of this year's conference – Social Work and the Sustainable Development Goals,

resonates with our times but most importantly, it is one that requires our wholehearted participation.

Having attended many of these conferences previously, I am heartened and motivated by the passion, diverse voices and people who represent the social work profession. These conferences are pivotal to our profession, enabling us to connect and engage while strengthening positive outcomes across key issues affecting the region.

While this year's conference may look a little different, being exclusively online, our commitment to providing a meaningful, purposeful and lasting experience remains as strong as ever. Incorporating many of the latest technologies in conference broadcasting, connecting social workers and industry professionals has never been easier.

I personally look forward to welcoming you all from 11-13 November and to connecting, learning, discussing and collaborating with you to strengthen our profession.

Please enjoy this edition of *Social Work Focus* and I look forward to providing a summary of the Conference in the next edition.



Cindy Smith



CINDY SMITH

Chief Executive Officer

Having attended many of these conferences previously, I am heartened and motivated by the passion, diverse voices and people who represent the social work profession

Adjunct Professor Wayne Quilliam

Aboriginal photographer and artist



Aboriginal photographer, artist, film maker, drone pilot, Adjunct Professor Wayne Quilliam continues to expand his cultural practice as one of Australia's leading creative minds. His award-winning career includes the coveted NAIDOC Aboriginal Artist of the Year, Human Rights Media Award, Walkley Award for photojournalism and nominated as a Master of Photography by National Geographic.

He has created and curated over 300 exhibitions throughout the world and the first photographer to hold 4 individual exhibitions at the UN in New York and Geneva for his work on Indigenous people rights.

Wayne works with Indigenous groups in Cuba, Mexico, Bolivia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia and Guam developing intercultural art and cultural exchanges,

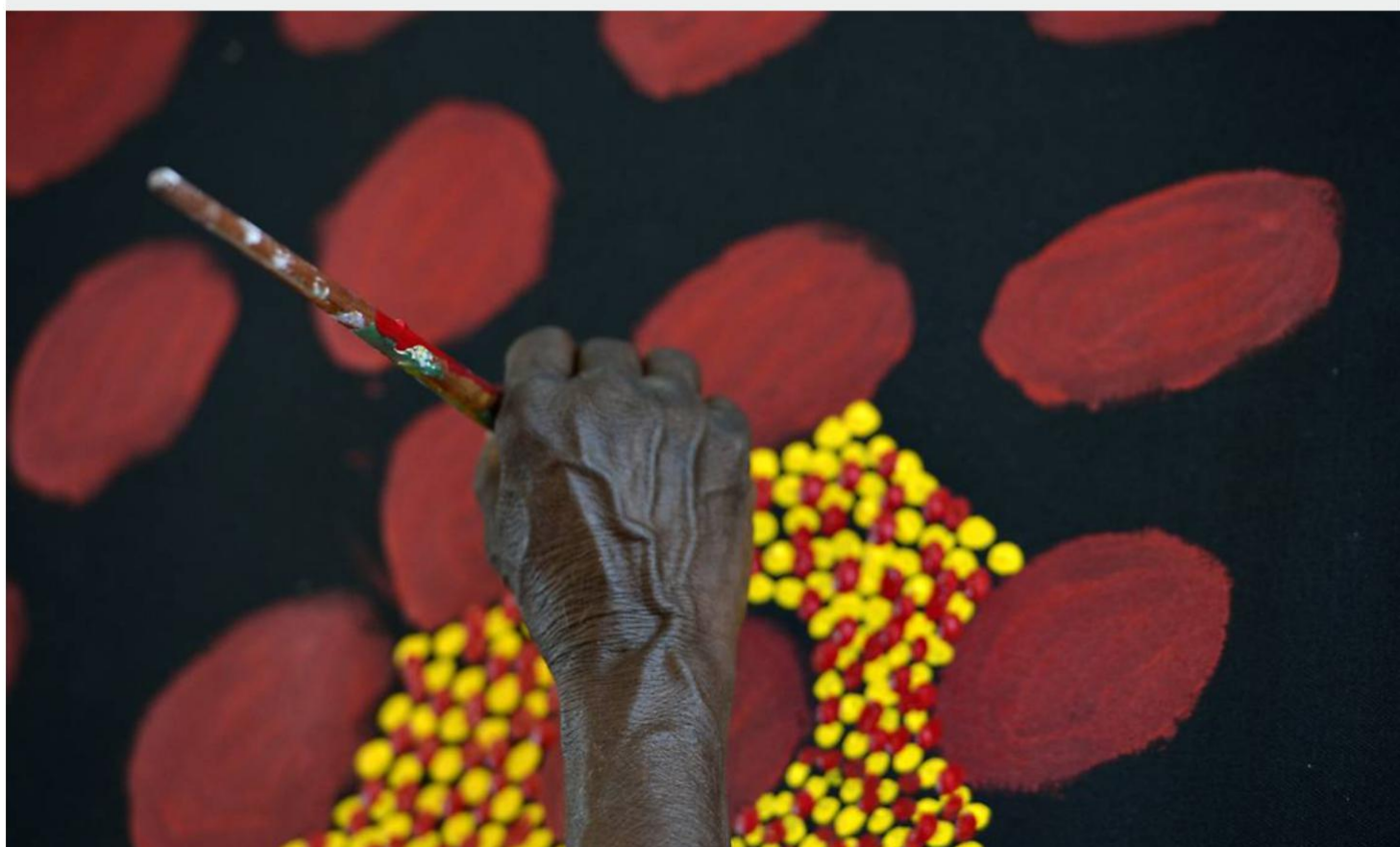
In harmony with his photojournalistic work he is recognised as one of the country's top artists for his diverse art practices including the 'Lowanna' series that infuses textures of earth onto the human form. The DJIWARR series exploring connection to country as seen through the latest drone technology and his photographic exhibition of the 'Apology'.

In 2020, Wayne released his first book title '[Culture is Life](#)'. He has been commissioned to create a series of work to be projected onto the Sydney Harbour Bridge during Vivid Festival. Wayne's art will feature on the Mt Yengo wine labels and his 3D creations will open at the World Expo on Dubai.

www.aboriginal.photography

www.aboriginalart.art

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Introducing Susan Green

AASW Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Representative Director

In 2021, Professor Susan Green was elected to the AASW's Board of Directors as the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Representative Director.

Professor Susan Green is a Galari woman of the Wiradjuri nation. Sue holds the role of Professor in Indigenous Australian Studies and GCWLCH Co-ordinator at Charles Sturt University.

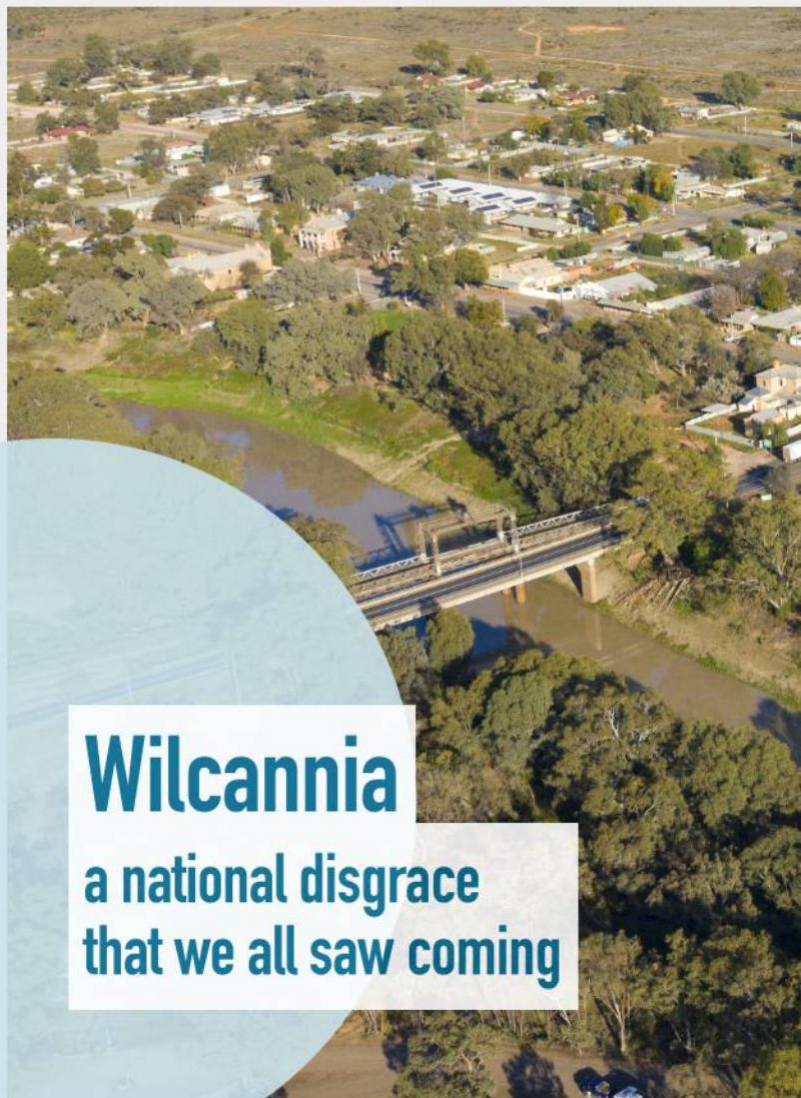
Sue is Chair of the Association's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group and a Member of the National Ethics Committee.

Sue has had an extensive history spanning 20 years in Indigenous Higher Education across several roles such as student support, teaching and research. She also has sat on various committees, councils, boards and networks including the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council and National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network.

Sue's research interest includes Welfare History, Indigenising Social Work education and practice, Cultural Responsiveness and Cultural Support, Colonial History and Decolonisation. Her foremost interest is ensuring that Wiradjuri Language and Culture underpins her all aspects of her personal and professional life.

Sue is the media spokesperson for the AASW on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander issues.

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Wilcannia
a national disgrace
that we all saw coming

The COVID-19 crisis in Wilcannia demonstrates how structural racism and entrenched neglect, combined with a national and global pandemic, create a perfect storm that impacts the most marginalised within any society.

As I write this, the rate of infections of COVID-19 in Wilcannia have risen to more than one in 10; they were at 4.94 per hundred people on Saturday, which was the highest transmission rate in the country. It's climbing, and I'm scared.

All areas of concern within the Greater Sydney region have drastically lower rates of infection. While the areas of concern within the Greater Sydney region also have high populations of Aboriginal people and people from marginalised backgrounds, who governments have also neglected, the comparison to what is happening within Wilcannia is stark.

The treatment of Barkindji (Aboriginal people of Wilcannia) and other Aboriginal peoples who have made it their home is appalling by anyone's standards and should be unacceptable to every Australian. The stories that are flooding out of Wilcannia of mistreatment



of Aboriginal people should make every person stand up and demand action immediately.

The story of the young woman with three small children who were made to sit outside of a hospital in the cold of the night before being sent home should make us all ashamed. The hospital was overwhelmed, under-resourced and medical staff simply sent her home. Her mother took control, called the ambulance, and the Royal Flying Doctor Service flew her to hospital in Adelaide in a serious condition.

Can you imagine a Sydney resident being made to sit outside in the cold and then sent home without so much as a referral to a service that could help? Sydneysiders are given medical care, even if it means being taken to a hospital outside your area.

Or the case of a woman who had police arrive on her doorstep to inform her that she had tested positive to COVID-19,

and they must take her to the isolation unit. There was no phone call from NSW Health, just police arriving to take her to isolation. Her elderly mother, who is on dialysis, was taken to another town.

Families are being ripped apart at the very time that they need the support of each other.

Then there are the stories of Aboriginal people who have mental illness or disorders, who require regular treatment and medication. They are being picked up in police vans and taken to the hospital because they 'may' have COVID-19. We are told that police vans are 'easier' to clean.

This would be distressing enough if you did not have a mental illness or disorder. If you do have one, this is horrendous treatment.

Relations between Aboriginal communities and the police have historically not been the best. Have we all not heeded the message behind last

year's Black Lives Matter protests? Put more resources into community and healthcare. Stop using police to carry out what health and community workers should be doing, such as paramedics, nurses, doctors and social workers. Treating those who are sick is not a police matter.

I am not blaming the police or the defence force. They are carrying the load and doing all they can to assist the community, much of which NSW Health should be resourced to do. Without the police and the defence force, Wilcannia would be in a much worse situation than it currently is. However, that does not change the fact that we need a health and community response, not a law and order response. Why are there so few health workers on the ground?

Aboriginal people are isolating in tents in backyards during the cold desert nights due to overcrowded housing and houses in deplorable conditions. Aboriginal people do not choose to



The idea that somehow the rate of transmission within Aboriginal communities is the communities' fault because they are not stepping up to be vaccinated is another lie and blame-shifting yet again

live in overcrowded and poor-quality housing; that is all that is available. This overcrowded and poor-quality housing is what results in poor health outcomes. A pandemic worsens the situation and is a disaster waiting to happen. It's impossible to isolate and get better in comfort when you live in absolute poverty. Who supports people to deal with emotional and psychological impacts, as well as a physical illness? The very same people who have experienced being torn from their families and communities for generations under government policies and programs.

Then there are those being fined up to \$5,000 for leaving home to get food for themselves or others. There is only one supermarket in town, and it was closed for deep cleaning. There is no delivery service. When did it become necessary to fine people who are trying to access food? Why is trying to survive now a crime? Not forgetting that those people being fined are already living on meagre incomes. Having to pay those fines will

cause significant distress and further financial problems.

Yes, it's true that beggars can't be choosers, but why do Aboriginal people always have to be the beggars? The justification should not be 'well they chose to live there'. Choice has nothing to do with it; this is their Country, their land, their home, and they have the right to remain there. That does not take away their right to expect the same levels of services and programs that other Australians can access much more easily. No one chooses to live in poverty, no one chooses to live in sub-standard conditions, and everyone has the right to be provided with the services and programs regardless of who they are or where they live. It must be remembered that Barkindji live on their Country because they love their Country. Living on Country is not a burden; rather, it is about belonging and connection to Country. The biggest honour is to care for your Country and live on your Country, the Country that gives you your identity and your place in this world.

We are now seeing the situation in Wilcannia did not just happen overnight, nor was it unforeseen. The neglect of Aboriginal people by current and successive governments has led us to this point. Furthermore, we predicted last year that if COVID-19 entered Aboriginal communities, it would be a disaster. Instead of governments taking responsibility for their long term and ongoing failures, they seek to blame the people suffering the consequences of their failure.

The government demonised the family and community who attended a funeral, making false statements and allegations. The funeral occurred before restrictions and lockdowns outside of the Greater Sydney Region. There was a lack of understanding of the cultural obligations to attend funerals and honour the recently departed. Those who made the statements have expressed regret, but too little too late and only because they could not get away with telling bald lies. The suffering of that bereaved family was bad enough, but to have privileged white men publicly lie about them, is inexcusable.

The idea that somehow the rate of transmission within Aboriginal communities is the communities' fault because they are not stepping up to be vaccinated is another lie and blame-shifting yet again. While some Aboriginal people do not want to be vaccinated, the reality is many would have already been vaccinated had it been available. Aboriginal people were classified as 1B priority for the vaccines, but in many places, the vaccines were simply not available, either because the services on the ground did not have the capacity to deliver (mainly due to underfunding and lack of resources) or there just were not enough vaccines available. Many Aboriginal people across the state of NSW have reported long waiting lists to get vaccinated. It must also be noted that when Aboriginal people are wary of vaccines or do not

believe or trust what the government is saying, there is a long history for the reasons why. However, we do not even need to look at history; we can just look at the current events and see that the government has not been truthful in handling the growing crisis in Western NSW and in Aboriginal communities. Wilcannia is the current proof in the pudding.

Aboriginal people in Wilcannia are crying out and asking, 'Are we being left to die?' What is the answer that Australians have? What is our response, and can we continue to justify the

neglect and abuse of Aboriginal people? This is a national crisis, yet Aboriginal people are being turned away from hospitals, are being fined for trying to obtain food for themselves and others, are being delivered to the hospital in the cages on the back of police vans and are being blamed for the arrival of this deadly virus in their community. When does it stop, and when do those responsible for the years of neglect and incompetence finally start to take responsibility?

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About the author

Professor Sue Green is the Australian Association of Social Workers' Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Board representative.

She is a social worker and Galari woman of the Wiradjuri nation and a Professor of Aboriginal Studies at Charles Sturt University.

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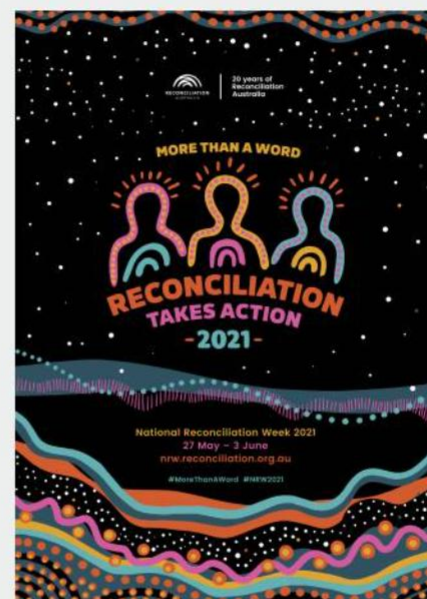
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National Reconciliation Week

#MoreThanAWord

We celebrate this National Reconciliation Week 2021, and its theme **More than a word: Reconciliation takes action**. We also acknowledge 26 May, which is Sorry Day, the day before NRW2021. Please read the [AASW's 2004 Statement of Apology](#).



With recent Black Lives Matter protests and growing numbers of people at Invasion Day rallies, people are becoming more understanding of and speaking up on issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This year's theme, **More than a word. Reconciliation takes action**, asks people to take this awareness and knowledge, and use it as springboard to more substantive, brave action.

Everyone has a role to play in Reconciliation. Australia has a dark history of oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and National Reconciliation Week is an opportunity for us to reflect on this history and to do better into the future.

AASW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Director, Professor Sue Green said National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week are two key moments in our year that, while they remind us of the wrongs of the past, are crucial in helping us move forward together.

"Sorry Day is an opportunity for all of us to engage with the continuing story of the First Nations peoples of this country and their interactions with non-Indigenous people. It is not about making people feel guilty about events that are the legacies left to us all. Instead, it is an invitation to ensure that the historical wrongs do not continue to happen."

"Social workers experienced in working with people who are recovering from trauma know that full acceptance is a necessary ingredient of recovery. So, understanding the destructive impact of past policies and practices, and accepting that wrongs were committed, is the necessary first step towards a national healing."

"On Sorry Day, during National Reconciliation Week and into the future we all need to acknowledge that an awareness of the issues is not the endpoint of the reconciliation process. Reconciliation is 'More than a word, Reconciliation takes action'."

Professor Green said that for the AASW, reconciliation is a positive, reciprocal relationship between First Nations peoples and non-Indigenous people based on trust and respect.

"Reconciliation means that First Nations peoples are able to participate equally and fully in all areas of Australian social, political, community and economic life, and that they enjoy the same health, wellbeing and life outcomes of non-Indigenous people."

"Awareness is an important starting point but the ambition should be to move away from the safe behaviours we might have undertaken in the past. Instead, it is time to embrace 'braver and more impactful action' that will enhance the quality of life of everyone, and to create a

society where everyone has the opportunity to flourish and reach their full potential."

"Brave action means challenging people's ingrained preconceptions and assumptions, and supporting people, communities and organisations as they embrace change in their behaviours, their policies and procedures."

Professor Green said the AASW joins with Reconciliation Australia in its call to make sure actions have impact.

"Social workers' commitment to human rights and social justice means that they are constantly addressing the systemic and structural issues that lead to inequality and injustice."

"During National Reconciliation Week we call on the whole of community to join us, as we direct our action to ending the discrimination and racism that First Nations Australians still experience," she said.

Now, more than ever social work has the ability to mend our past wrongs and to be part of the solution of Reconciliation.

Reconciliation Action Plan update

In the last edition of *Social Work Focus*, we showcased events from around the country in celebration of NAIDOC Week which highlighted that all arms of the Association continue to progress the spirit of the RAP to create a more culturally safe Australia for all.

As we move in to the second year of the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2020-2022, we are faced with some of the more challenging aspects of the RAP, which requires us to look inward at structural components within the Association which can act as barriers or preclude people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander from becoming members or being employed.

We're in the initial stages of a scoping study to better understand the barriers

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face in becoming members and/or maintaining a membership with the Association. We aim to then be able to look at ways in which we can address some of those barriers. Further, in the coming months, we will also begin work on a diversity and inclusion strategy for the whole of the organisation. Through this, we hope to be able to address barriers that may be present in people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in gaining employment



with the Association. These projects will look to go beyond what we have done to date, and really interrogate our systems and structures, to really give rise to the spirit of the RAP and to hopefully effect systemic change.

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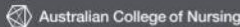
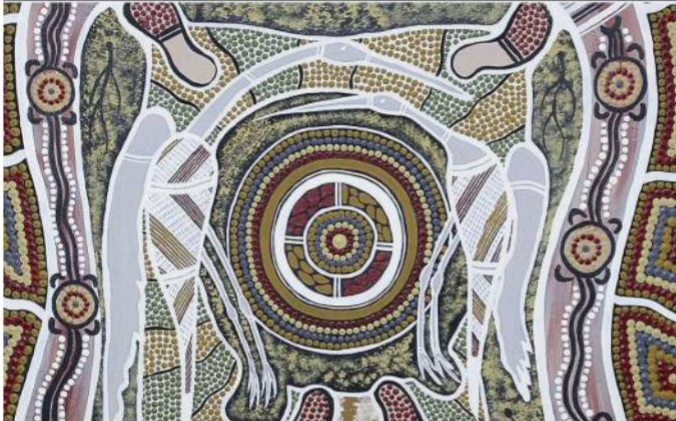


Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme

The Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme (PHMSS) is designed to encourage and assist undergraduate students in health-related disciplines to complete their studies and join the health workforce. The scheme provides scholarships for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people studying an entry level health course.

The Australian Government established the Scheme as a tribute to the late Dr Arnold 'Puggy' Hunter's outstanding contribution to Indigenous Australians' health and his role and Chair of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO). [NACCHO News - special tribute edition](#) provides an insight to Puggy and his tireless efforts to improve Aboriginal health.

Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme will open for applications Monday 30 August 2021 for studies undertaken in 2022, closing Monday 11 October 2021. Online applications will be available from this website once the scheme opens.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Scholarships

That career in health is closer than you think!

The Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme is open to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students who will be studying an entry-level course in any of the following disciplines:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander primary health care
- Dentistry/oral health
- Mental health studies* **NEW**
- Nursing
- Midwifery
- Medicine
- Allied health

*Additional places for mental health related studies have been made available!

OPENING DATE
30 August 2021

CLOSING DATE
11 October 2021

Visit acn.edu.au/phmss to find out more and apply.

The Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme is funded by the Australian Government. ACN is proud to work with the Department of Health as the lead administrator for this program.

scholarships@acn.edu.au 1800 688 628

Funding is provided for the normal duration of the course. Full time scholarship awardees will receive up to \$15,000 per year and part time recipients will receive up to \$7,500 per year. The funding is paid in 24 fortnightly instalments throughout the study period of each year.

[Find out more.](#)



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13th anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations

The AASW honoured the 13th anniversary of the National Apology on 12 February 2021. This Day is one for reflection and a commitment to action when the social work profession can reflect on the harm it has caused Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Day is an opportunity to look to the future and renew our commitment to Reconciliation to ensure we never repeat the wrongs of the past.

AASW National Vice President Linda Ford said the National Apology acknowledged the hurts and injustices of the past. We need to continue moving forward and embrace the opportunities that have arisen since the National Apology, which can bring us together as a country.

"The anniversary of the National Apology provides the social work profession with a powerful reminder of the continuing impact of history on our profession and the communities our profession serves. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the

strength and resilience of our Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander colleagues, community members and clients. May we move forward together in a spirit of solidarity for a more united Australia.

"The AASW, in its commitment to Reconciliation, has continued to take meaningful action by launching its 2020-2022 Reconciliation Action Plan in mid-2020. The Association's third RAP ensures that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members are represented in our decision-making, our activities, and our future directions.

"With this plan and alongside our Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander colleagues, we will strive to be the best possible allies by actively listening, by decolonising the way we work, by

working in partnership. We will make sure Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander colleagues and members of our communities shape our work.

"We also know that to look forward and build authentic partnerships requires truth-telling and real understanding. Acknowledging the black history of our country, the historical role of social work and the current status of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in our community is essential in building partnerships that are grounded in truth," she said.

-

Closing the Gap

We need to focus on access to culture and language as central to wellbeing

On national Close the Gap Day (18 March), the Australian Association of Social Workers called for significant investment to reach the targets set out in the Closing the Gap Refresh and emphasise First Nations people's right to culture and language.

AASW Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Board Director, Professor Sue Green, said the government had set several targets, including 16 new targets, with most having a 'by' date of 2031. However, to make any of these achievable, there needs to be a focus on cultural wellbeing, including all First Nations people having access to their language and culture.

Professor Green said, "Australia currently views the Closing the Gap targets through a Western lens and uses colonial structures, for example, the Western education system, to measure

progress. This is not how First Nations people shape their worldview, and it is not the way to see real progress in eradicating the inequality experienced by First Nations people.

"The only way to Close the Gap is to stop seeing First Nations people as if they are the problem or as if they are entrenched in the problem. We need to start ensuring that every man, woman, and child, regardless of their age and location, has access to their language and culture. We need to provide this culturally, appropriately, and safely.

"Language and culture are paramount to First Nations people, and they do not exist without each other. Language and culture strengthen peoples' cultural identity and create the foundations for cultural wellbeing. This then sets the ground for all other forms of wellbeing and social inclusion.

"This means that the learning of language and culture must have teaching adults, with elders and others as the starting point, so that they can teach young people and children.

"The teaching of language must be done culturally and not as an academic exercise, and thus the teaching of language must remain in the hands of the peoples whose language it is. Only then will we see the lives of First Nations people improve across the country," Professor Green said.



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Uluru Statement from the Heart

Take it to your Heart

"...We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country. We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution. In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard... We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future."

It is now over four years since the Uluru Statement from the Heart was released by delegates to the First Nations National Constitutional Convention, held over four days near Uluru in Central Australia.

Four years later, nothing has happened. Can you let our representatives in Canberra know that we want this reform by sending a letter to your Federal MP?

Can you tell them that:

- You support the Uluru Statement from the Heart
- You will vote "Yes" at a referendum to protect the Voice in the Constitution.
- You do not support a legislation-first approach?

We have the power to see this reform happen. Go to ulurustatement.org to find your local MP and send a letter.





Australia Day

A continuing open wound

The AASW supports the Change the Date movement, as the official Australia Day public holiday is still marked on 26 January.

In January this year, AASW Vice-President Linda Ford, an Aboriginal woman from the Bigambul people of South West Queensland and AASW Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Board Director Professor Susan Green, a Galari woman of the Wiradjuri nation, countered the current date.

Australia Day continues to be an open wound on the Australian landscape that we will not resolve until a new date is found, which truly unifies all Australian peoples, the pair declared.

Ms Ford said that for many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians, 26 January and what it stands for is a day of mourning, not celebration.

"The Australia Day date was proclaimed when Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people were not considered Australian people. The lack of recognition of this history and unwillingness to change the date continue to disenfranchise this country's First Nations people.

"Many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people want to celebrate being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians. They want recognition of their culture, history, strengths, resilience and survival. Still, Australia Day continues to represent the beginning of Western colonisation and the devastation that this continues to have on Australia's first peoples.

"Unfortunately, the denial of the history prevents the unity of citizenship wanted by the First Nations people of this country. Not changing the date keeps us stuck in the past, all of us," she said.

Professor Green said the current Australia Day is more aligned to the marking Federation, which should be celebrated on 1 January.

"In the past, each colony had their own date and different names, such as Anniversary Day and Foundation Day. The date has changed many times before to reflect current times, and it can change again.

"Changing the date would be an essential step toward Reconciliation and also demonstrate that Australia is

willing to acknowledge our past, heal wrongs and move into a future that recognises, embraces and celebrates all we have become.

"As social workers, we will continue to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian leaders, groups and communities towards Reconciliation. Central to this is supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian leadership and enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian voices to be heard and respected," Professor Green said.

The lack of recognition of this history and unwillingness to change the date continue to disenfranchise this country's First Nations people

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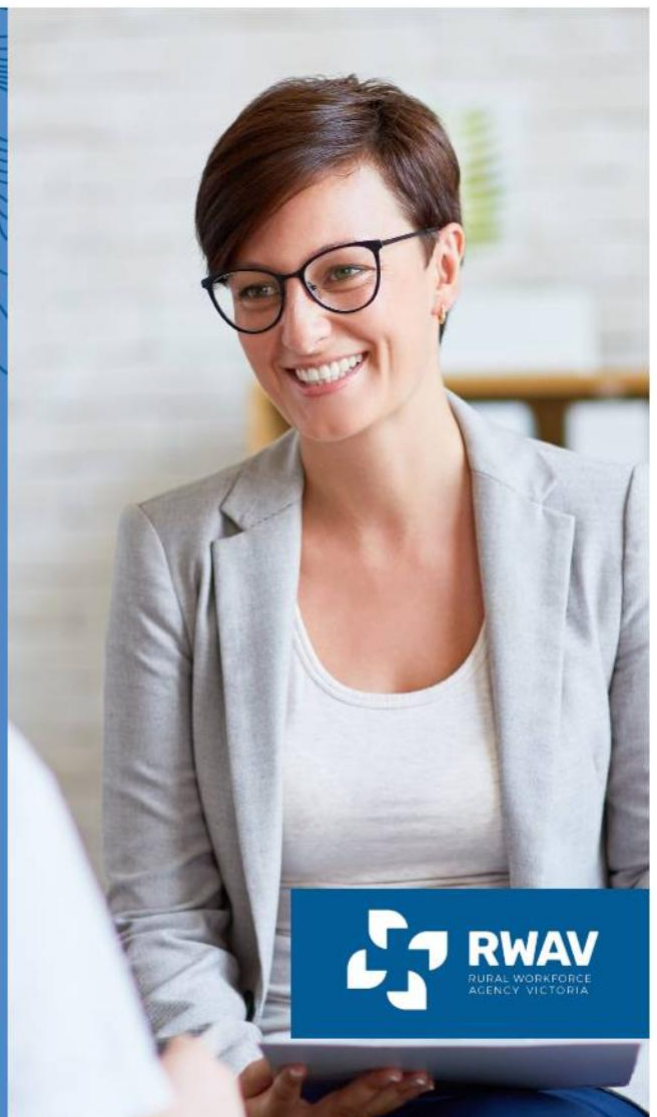
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Thursday, 10 March 2022

SAVE THE DATE

Vale

Emeritus Professor Maev O'Collins MBE



Maev was born on 16 June 1929 and died Saturday 3 July 2021. Her passing was sudden and quick. Maev was part of a large family and always wanted to help people. She gained her first degree, a Bachelor of Arts from University of Melbourne in 1950. She then gained a Diploma of Social Studies from the University of Sydney in 1951, a Master of Science in Social Work from Columbia University in 1969 and a Doctor of Social Welfare from Columbia University in 1972.

Maev's first position as a social worker was in 1952 as a Community Development Worker for the Melbourne-based Catholic Family Welfare Bureau. Her long and distinguished social work career had encompassed the child and family welfare, academia and international aid and development.

After she finished her postgraduate studies at Columbia University in New York, she went to Papua New Guinea and took up a position at the University of Port Moresby and became Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology. She established new social work and welfare programs that prepared graduates to work with complex social issues often in very remote locations in the PNG Highlands. Her expertise in cross cultural social work and welfare practice was often tested as she sought to develop new educational programs within a colonial institutional context. Maev went on to utilise this valuable experience in her work in a range of projects including training Peace Keepers in the Solomon Islands. She undertook several consultancies in PNG, Vanuatu and Norfolk Island and contributed to several Government reports in Australia.

In 1987, Maev was awarded an MBE for her services to PNG and on her retirement in 1989 was made an Emeritus Professor at Australian Catholic University.

Returning to Australia she settled in Canberra and devoted herself to the development of the social work course at the Australian Catholic University. In 1996, Maev accepted an invitation to assist in the foundation of the School of Social Work at ACU as an Adjunct Professor. In 2018, the AASW recognised her contribution to social work by awarding her life membership. In 2019, the University bestowed on her its highest honour: Doctor of the University (honoris causa). During the 25 years with ACU she became part of the fabric of the Campus community.

She was a person of extraordinary warmth, welcoming and conscience. She was a tireless advocate for women, First Nations peoples and for the people of PNG and Melanesia. She had a gentle nature and encouraged tolerance. In 2017, she provided financial support to the University for the establishment of a scholarship to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work students. This became known as the Maev O'Collins Scholarship.

She will be missed by many of the students she has helped over the years and the lecturers of Canberra campus of the Australian Catholic University.

If you would like to honour her memory, please donate to the Maev O'Collins Scholarship Fund <https://webapps.acu.edu.au/givenow/>

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Aboriginal social worker in a mainstream role

As an Aboriginal social worker, how do I still contribute to our mob when working in a mainstream role?

KARINA MAXWELL



About the author

Karina Maxwell is a Ngugi woman from Quandamooka (Moreton and Stradbroke Islands, and Wynnum area), Queensland, single mother, casual academic and tutor for the University of Queensland, industry division member for the Services Union, Queensland Branch Management Committee member with the AASW, Co-convenor of the AASW First Nations and Allies sub-committee. With 13 years experience as a social worker, she has worked in a number of different areas including with First Nations families; asylum seekers on community detention; Queensland Government policy and cabinet work; crisis accommodation; group work; and mental health.

Yura! (Meaning: Hello in the Jandai Language) I am a proud Ngugi woman from Quandamooka and a proud social worker. As an Aboriginal woman, my first passion is always to support and contribute to our mob in any way that I can. As a social worker and the person that I am, outside of the First Nations space, I will always fight for any injustice and am passionate about all aspects of fairness, social justice and mental health. I currently work in a mainstream organization supporting Queensland workers going through a psychological injury due to the workplace (and I absolutely love what I do). When I say psychological injury, it is usually at the hands of someone else, such as violent clients, or bullying behaviour to name a couple of a sadly, ever-growing list of experiences within the workplace. I have written an article on this particular topic recently that was published in the AASW Focus earlier this year regarding this work if you would like to see more information. This particular work is ground-breaking and the first of its kind in Australia, and I am very proud to be a part of such an amazing initiative. So with this amazing work that I do, how do I feed my first passion to supporting our mob? By working extra hard, and contributing through my workplace and outside of it wherever I can but always being mindful of trying to keep some kind of work-life balance (the last thing I

would want to do is be like some of the workers that call my service and I need to practice what I preach in regards to selfcare).

I support our mob in a variety of ways. At my work, being the only Aboriginal person here, I go outside of my job description to support, provide advice and connect my colleagues in supporting First Nations people. My workplace is the Queensland Council of Unions, and they are the overarching body for many Queensland based unions and organize things like the Labor Day March and various other events as well as contributing to campaigns and policy initiatives such as the "Respect" one earlier this year around stopping sexual harassment in the workplace. Around NAIDOC, they have two awards that they present to celebrate the Unions contribution in supporting First Nations people. The first award is for a nominated Union to acknowledge their contribution towards the progression and development of First Nations workers, as well as the Uncle Bob Anderson award to a First Nations activist who has made an outstanding contribution towards the progression and development of First Nations people. Outside of my paid role, I have actively been a part of the judging panel for these awards for the last two years, although this is a difficult task as the



nominations are of an extremely high calibre with so much good work being done within the union movement. When looking through the history of Unions, they have always supported our mob and I am quite proud to have some part in supporting and encouraging these initiatives.

But of course, this is not enough for me. And I always crave to do more for our mob. The last four years I have done quite a bit at the University of Queensland (UQ) as well, after hours, some paid and some voluntary work. This includes being part of a course at UQ for social workers, midwives and nurses called *Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*; tutoring two amazing First Nations social work students for the last 2 years; and a member of the Pro Vice Chancellors Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alumni Reference Group. In particular, the tutoring is most rewarding, it is more than tutoring and I have the opportunity to provide support, guidance and mentoring as well as giving back to the profession and supporting our mob.

I also make sure I catchup with fellow First Nations and allies social workers, as I find this incredibly supportive and we have a great time, even though we all work in completed different fields.

My latest endeavour, which started up in April this year is co-convening the First Nations and Allies Sub-Committee through the Qld AASW branch. This has been a very rewarding experience and we have a good collegial team, albeit only three of us from the start with a new member just recently joining. We are always

looking for more members, if you would like to join, please get in contact with the AASW Qld Branch. This is for First Nations and strong allies and is about putting forward initiatives, organising yarnning circles and so much more.

On top of all this? In the past I was the Deputy Chair on the Murri School for 3 years, right throughout the big Covid lockdown last year, as well as during the time that there was a change of Principal, creating a lot of extra work. I am still an Elder-In-Council with the Quandamooka Yoolooburraba Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) and have actively supported my family throughout the Native Title process. With the Native Title determination on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) that happened in 2011, and the one that I have been more involved with, on Mulgumpin (Moreton Island) in November 2019. Always trying to keep family up to date with what is happening as well as organising get togethers and supporting our amazing elder Uncle Bob Anderson (yes the same Uncle Bob that has the Union award named after him mentioned above).

I will always try my best to support my family, my mob and the greater community.

Why do I do this? Being a social worker, I have so many passions but my main focus is supporting First Nations people and fellow social workers. I find all that I do incredibly rewarding and hope that I make a positive contribution to everything I am a part of. It is an amazing profession with so many similar values to First

Nations ways. I am very proud to be Aboriginal. And I am very proud to be a Social Worker.

You may ask yourself... when do I get time out from all of this? I have been a social worker for many years now, and over the years, have experienced and seen what happens if you don't look after yourself and take time out and practice selfcare. I am very strict on myself to ensure that I practice selfcare on a daily basis, it may be as simple as a mindfulness technique or playing scrabble on my phone. On a weekly basis, as an extrovert, I am energized by my interactions with people, I partake in regular events with people that are outside of my profession, to have a laugh, be silly and just "be". I have made my home a haven, where I can sit and look out, enjoy the sun, watch the birds, breath and relax. My ultimate selfcare though, is always being on country whether that be Mulgumpin or Minjerribah, I try to get over there for a few days at least a couple of times a year, with my amazing family and friends. Walking barefoot on the beach where my ancestors walked, and breathing in the fresh air. This is why I do what I do...

Yuway! (meaning: Goodbye in the Jandai Language)

Karina Jawang* Maxwell

*Jawang means Magpie in Jandai Language. Magpies who are fierce protectors, family orientated and social birds.

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Cultural connection and identity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in foster and kinship care

KATE THOMPSON

This project aims to improve the experiences of, and outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children in out-of-home care (OOHC). There are three studies within the project Enhancing Children's Journeys in Out-of-home Care: A Multi-perspective Study. Study 3, Kate Thompson's PhD study, will explore cultural connection and identity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC.



About the author

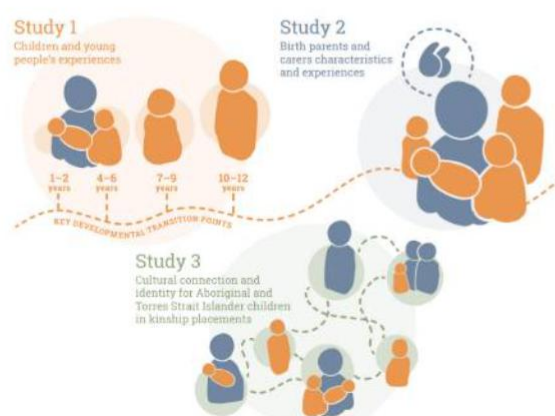
Kate Thompson is a Gooreng (Bundaberg) and Yuggerah (Ipswich) woman from Bundaberg, Queensland.

Kate has frontline experience in the foster and kinship care space and as a casual academic at the University of Queensland in the course "Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples".

After completing a Bachelor of Social Work (Honours) from the University of Queensland (UQ) in 2017, Kate gained employment at an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation in the Foster and Kinship Care team. In this role, Kate had the opportunity to work alongside and support foster and kinship carers to ensure they were best supported to care for the children in their care. Whilst in this position, Kate had the opportunity to sit with, and learn from, a passionate group of industry professionals and researchers who developed the project Enhancing Children's Journeys in Out-of-home Care: A Multi-perspective Study and received an Australian Government ARC Linkage Project grant.

INTRODUCTION

There are unprecedented numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being removed from their families and placed into OOHC by statutory child protection systems across Australia. More broadly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented across all aspects of the child protection system, including notification, investigation and substantiation stages, protection and care orders, and OOHC compared to non-Indigenous children. In 2021, 18,900 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are in OOHC, making up approximately 40% of all children in OOHC (AIHW, 2021, p.54). In Queensland, where this



The three studies within the project Enhancing Children's Journeys in Out-of-home Care: A Multi-perspective Study

study occurs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 8.5 times more likely to be in OOHC than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

Cultural connection and identity are a key concept of Kate's study. Kate highlights that it is essential to understand these concepts from an Indigenous perspective (nationally and internationally). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families, and communities pass on knowledge, culture, tradition, and ceremony from one generation to the next through storytelling, performance, teachings of Elders, language, and the protection of significant sites. Making connections is an integral part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and ways of being, knowing, and doing. Considering this information, we must question a child's ability to make these connections when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's best interests and cultural connection and identity are viewed through, and managed by, a Western lens or approach to practice.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (the Principle) is essential to this research project. It outlines the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to remain connected to their community, family, country, and culture. A literature review showed that despite the Principle being enshrined in legislation, data suggest a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin. Further, although the Principle emphasises the need for cultural connection and identity, little is known about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship care contributes to, and impacts, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's cultural connection and identity in OOHC.

Kate's thesis focuses on understanding how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers, birth parents, and other key stakeholders support the development of cultural identity and cultural connection of children in their care. The purpose of the

thesis is to build knowledge that will help to ensure that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are removed from their families and placed into OOHC, their connection to family, community, culture, and country continues. Kate's PhD study will propose a more meaningful and sustainable implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in addition to providing valuable insight and guidance for future practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Kate's PhD study has adopted a two-phase qualitative design to capture the perspectives of carers, birth parents, and other key stakeholders.

Phase 1

Phase 1 aims to understand the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers and birth parents regarding cultural connection and identity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC. The sample for Phase 1 of the study will include 30 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander kinship carers and 30 birth parents from South East, South West, and Far North regions of Queensland. For feasibility reasons, Phase 1 will use a subset of the data collected in Wave 1 of data collection (from July–October 2021) within the broader longitudinal project.

Phase 2

Phase 2 aims to develop a deeper understanding of what facilitates and inhibits cultural connection and identity and the implementation of the connection element of the Principle in policy and practice to overcome any identified barriers.

This will be achieved by utilising the findings from Phase 1 as the stimulus for yarning circles with key stakeholders, including policymakers, key informants, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers and community leaders.

Approximately 40 participants will be recruited via purposive sampling methods. The sample will include 20 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander service providers with frontline experience, 10 policymakers and key informants, and 10 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community leaders with knowledge of, or connection to, the OOHC system.

Similar to Phase 1, the sample will be drawn from three key areas in Queensland, including South East, South West, and Far North Queensland. For the purpose of data collection, two yarning circles will be facilitated in each of the following locations: Toowoomba, Brisbane, and Cairns. One yarning circle will include policymakers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers, while the other will consist of community leaders. In total, six yarning circles will be held for data collection.

Data from each phase will be collated and compared to gain a holistic understanding of the meaning of cultural connection and identity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC.

Indigenous research methods

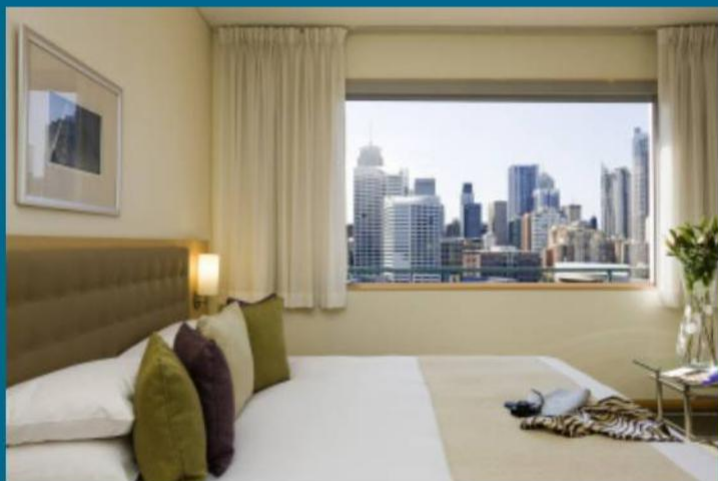
Kate will incorporate Indigenous research methods throughout her PhD. For example, yarning circles as a data collection method for Phase 2 has been selected to 1) capture knowledge systems and data more holistically, including relational connections and individual narratives; 2) compare narratives made during the yarning process; 3) acknowledge that the researcher and participants are holders and sharers of knowledge; 4) create a culturally appropriate and safe space for participants; and 5) generate in-depth, description-thick conversations.

If you are interested in learning more about Kate's PhD study, please get in touch with her. Email: kate.thompson1@uq.edu.au

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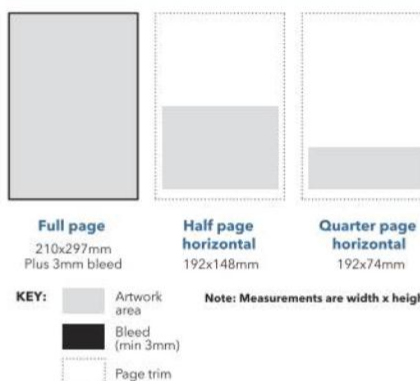
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