



# AbSec

ANNUAL REPORT

20<sup>18</sup>/<sub>19</sub>





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

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

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

Published October 2019

© AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community  
Peak Aboriginal Corporation (ICN 8926)

AbSec can be found at:

21 Carrington Road  
Marrickville NSW 2204

Phone: (02) 9559 5299

E-mail: [admin@absec.org.au](mailto:admin@absec.org.au)

Website: [www.absec.org.au](http://www.absec.org.au)

Facebook: @AbSecNSW

Twitter: @AbSecNSW



# Contents

A message from our Chairperson	2
A message from our Chief Executive Officer	3
2017/2018 Highlights	4
Who we are	6
Our strategy	10
<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTION A:</b> A Voice for our children, families, carers and communities	12
<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTION B:</b> Support for the Aboriginal sector	16
<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTION C:</b> Securing partners and resources	18
<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTION D:</b> Organisational strength and sustainability	22
Financials	26



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR Chairperson

The year we've just emerged from has been a welcome reminder of how important it is that the NSW child and family sector is well represented and supported by its peak body. As Chairperson of AbSec, I know we are only as strong as the mandates identified by the members of our communities. This Annual Report shows how we have built on the foundations of previous years to further strengthen our engagement with Aboriginal peoples across NSW, advocating for substantive change that will mean better outcomes for our children, families and communities.

AbSec has seen out the final year of the current Strategic Plan cycle with an unwavering commitment to the strategic directions set by our Board, members and stakeholders. We remain steadfast in our commitment to implement the refreshed 2019-2022 Strategic Plan (the Plan), finalised in early 2019, and continuing our focus on representing the interests of Aboriginal children, families, communities and organisations.

AbSec has developed our foundations by articulating our strategic vision for the future in supporting vulnerable Aboriginal children and families. Complementing this, we have worked hard with our stakeholders, including government, to formulate a long term strategy to realise our safety net of Aboriginal child

and family organisations across NSW, through the Aboriginal Child and Family Investment Strategy.

There still remains challenges to embedding our strategic goals of Aboriginal self-determination. The concern we have voiced around measures being taken by government to enable adoption of Aboriginal children remain a top priority for AbSec. We remain firm in our view that solutions and challenges in this child protection, early intervention and out-of-home care system must be driven by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal children and families – Aboriginal Solutions for Aboriginal Communities.

I would like to acknowledge the leadership of AbSec and thank my fellow board members and our Chief Executive Officer, Mr Tim Ireland, for their continued passion for, and commitment to, our children, families and communities. I am confident that with the next Strategic Planning cycle, and the work we have done to date, we are able to continue delivering above and beyond as the NSW Aboriginal child and family peak organisation for many years to come.

**Ms Dana Clarke**  
CHAIRPERSON



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR

# Chief Executive Officer

It's been a big year of change for AbSec, both internally and externally, as we've planned for and embraced a new structural and strategic direction, and faced deeply challenging new legislative changes introduced by the NSW government.

The long awaited transition from being a state secretariat to an Aboriginal corporation has finally been completed, with our team seamlessly embracing the changes involved in our new legal status. The change will allow us to manage AbSec Learning and Development Centre as a revenue generating arm of the organisation and to continue to stand up and advocate for the rights of our children and young people.

In the theme of looking forward, the past year has also seen AbSec and its community rally round in the interests of building a new strategic plan for the organisation, due to commence implementation in 2019. AbSec's Strategic Plan 2019-2022 outlines the steps we intended to take to achieve our vision and objectives for Aboriginal children and young people, their families and communities. The Strategic Plan consolidates our work over many years, including the *Plan on a Page for Aboriginal Children and Young People*, the Aboriginal Child and Family Investment Strategy, and the commitment for our children, young people and families to be supported by our Aboriginal child and family organisations.

This year however, has also been marked by deeply concerning legislative changes introduced by the NSW government, regarding the adoption of our children. Late 2018 and early 2019 were defined by a co-ordinated campaign to call for alternate approaches. AbSec responded to the proposed changes, through the

*Best Care for Kids is Community* campaign, with strong advocacy on behalf of our communities, presenting a clear, positive and evidence-based alternative to the adoption pathway put forward by government.

Alongside our campaign and advocacy work, we continue to provide ongoing support to agencies and Aboriginal community controlled organisations, ensuring we're building a strong and connected sector. A significant focus continues to be placed on implementing the endorsed Aboriginal Case Management Policy, and developing Aboriginal-led commissioning approaches for our children, families and communities.

I'd like to acknowledge Dana Clarke as Chairperson, and the leadership shown by the AbSec Board over the last year, and the work they've contributed in articulating a new strategy for our organisation. I particularly acknowledge Suzanne Naden, Caine Raudino and Craig Ardler, who have stepped down from their positions on the AbSec Board this year. I thank them for their committed service and wish them the very best of luck in their future work. I welcome and thank Garry Matthews for stepping into the role of Treasurer, and Wendy Knight, Robert Skeen and William Henry for joining us on the board this year.

I'd also like to acknowledge the profound dedication and hard work of all the staff here at AbSec, who work tirelessly on behalf of the communities we serve.

**Mr Tim Ireland**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



**ABSEC 2018/2019**  
**HIGHLIGHTS &**  
**ACHIEVEMENTS**

---

# 18

More than 18 submissions, reports & papers to significant reviews, inquiries and strategic processes

# \$90K

Over \$90,000 dollars provided to support Aboriginal initiatives, sporting teams and community cultural events across NSW

# 7000 km

Covered more than 7000 km, visiting 19 Aboriginal community organisations in areas such as the Central Coast, Newcastle, Taree, Singleton, Coffs Harbour, Grafton, Maclean & Yamba.



# 13

13 Aboriginal young people in the Youth Ambassador Program with 9 new young people in 2018

# 15,000

15,000 people stood with us to oppose the adoption of Aboriginal children through the statutory child protection system, and to call for strengthened safeguards and greater accountability for Aboriginal children and families

# 1800

Delivered more than 1,800 hours of face-to-face and group support for Aboriginal organisations

# 360

Over 360 practitioners and sector stakeholders participated in the Cultural Connections Workshops across NSW



# 300

More than 300 individuals and organisations participated in consultations in the development of the Aboriginal Case Management Policy, including 16 workshops across the state with Aboriginal communities and organisations, government stakeholders and non-Aboriginal NGOs.

## STRENGTHENING

our partnership with the philanthropic sector through our relationship with the CAGES Foundation and SNOW Foundation, enabling us to do more for our children, families and communities.



# WHO WE ARE

AbSec (NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation) is the peak body for Aboriginal children, families, communities and organisations in NSW. We predominantly provide policy advice and undertake strategic initiatives to influence change and deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.

AbSec is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation representing Aboriginal child and family support services across the state. We work closely alongside these Aboriginal agencies, members and non-members alike, to help them provide the best services for our kids and families.

We also work with the NSW Government to propose policies and ways of working that put the needs of Aboriginal children first, and respect the views and rights of Aboriginal communities.

We are committed to advocating on behalf of Aboriginal children, families, carers and communities. All of our work ties into an overall goal to build a holistic child and family system, where Aboriginal people grow up safe and strong in identity, and have every opportunity for lifelong wellbeing.

This year, we changed our constitution and became an Aboriginal Corporation registered with the Office of the Registration of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). It was an important step for us to be recognised as a fully-fledged Aboriginal Corporation.

## Our Board of governance

The AbSec Board determines our strategic direction, provides oversight over major objectives, and ensures the good governance of the organisation. Our Board consists of representatives from Aboriginal community-controlled

organisations and individuals, all of whom must be members of the Corporation. The Board aims to convene on a bi-monthly basis; 7 face-to-face meetings were held during the 2018/2019 financial year.

## Board members

All board members that served the AbSec Board during the period 1st July 2018–30 June 2019 are listed below:

### Dana Clarke

Dana Clarke is a proud Biripi and Worimi woman. Dana has been an active member on the Board since 2005 and holds the position of Chairperson of AbSec.

Dana has contributed to our communities through a range of roles in Aboriginal health, child protection, sexual assault and mental health for over 25 years. Currently Dana is the Chief Executive Officer of Burrun Dalai Aboriginal Corporation. Burrun Dalai delivers early intervention, family preservation, and out-of-home care services across the Nambucca, Macleay, Hastings and Manning Valleys as well as the Tamworth and Armidale regions.

Dana's work reflects her deeply held belief that our kids and families are our future. Dana is committed to ensuring our communities are best supported to guarantee that our kids remain with family, rich in their culture and belonging. To Dana, "family is everything; it is our past and our future".

## Petrice Manton

Petrice Manton is a proud Aboriginal woman from the Gamipingal clan of the Worimi Nation. Petrice is the Deputy Chairperson at AbSec and is the current Chief Executive Officer of Muloobinba Aboriginal Corporation in Newcastle.

Petrice is passionate about advocating for Aboriginal families and making sure our people get a fair go. Petrice is committed to establishing culturally embedded, holistic Aboriginal services to support Aboriginal children and families to flourish, delivered by Aboriginal organisations that are accountable to our communities.

## Suzanne Naden

Suzanne Naden is a proud Yuin woman from La Perouse. She has grown up on the Central Coast where she now lives and works. Suzanne has been the Chief Executive Officer of Bungree Aboriginal Association since 2014 and served as Treasurer for AbSec until March 2019.

Suzanne has over 20 years of experience working with a broad range of government, private and community organisations. Suzanne describes her connection to family and community as the reason why she works to ensure that our children, young people, families and our aging and people with a disability receive access to quality services and programs that deliver better outcomes for their individual and family wellbeing and strive for social, cultural and community connections through our networks and partnerships

## Garry Matthews

Garry Matthews is a proud Gadigal man of the Eora Nation. Garry is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Abcare, located in Coffs Harbour and is AbSec's longest-serving Board Member, having been a founding member of AbSec in 1999/2000. In addition to this, Garry has served in a range of leadership positions in government and non-government organisations.

Garry stepped into the role of Treasurer of the board in March 2019. He strives for equitable outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities and wants to continue to be a voice for Aboriginal children and young people.

## Caine Raudino

Caine Raudino is a proud Wemba Wemba man from Swan Hill. Cain is the current CEO of Woomera Aboriginal Corporation in Albury and served on the board from 2017 until January 2019.

Caine enjoys spending time with his family and has a strong commitment to helping out our mob in any way that he can, reflecting his deep belief that investing in our children is an investment in our future.

## Tangerene Ingram

Tangerene Ingram is a proud Wiradjuri woman and has connections to Tumut and Brungle. Tangerene joined the AbSec Board in 2016. Tangerene is the Chief Executive Officer of Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation (RivMed) in Wagga Wagga. She previously managed the Family Services Unit and the Family Health Team at RivMed and has also coordinated the Wanggaay Koori out-of-home care services at Anglicare.

## Tina McGhie

Tina McGhie is a proud Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal woman born and raised on Dharawal Country. Tina has been an active member of AbSec's Board since 2008. Tina serves on the AbSec Board as an individual member of the Corporation.

## Wendy Knight

Wendy Knight is a proud Barkindji woman and committed to promoting indigenous perspectives on issues affecting Aboriginal children, families and communities. Wendy is an accomplished senior community services executive and currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of Ngunya Jarjum. She has over 15 years' experience working on complex socioeconomic issues such as child protection, out-of-home care, and service sector contract management in both government and non-government roles. Wendy serves on the AbSec Board as an individual member of the Corporation.

## Robert Skeen

Robert Skeen is a proud Aboriginal man with ties to the Gubbi-Gubbi, Mununjarli and Waanyi People of Queensland. Robert is passionate about improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander Community. Robert is currently serving as Chief Executive Officer of Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre. His work aims to ensure that Aboriginal families and communities enjoy the same level of health experienced by the rest of the country, regardless of where people live.

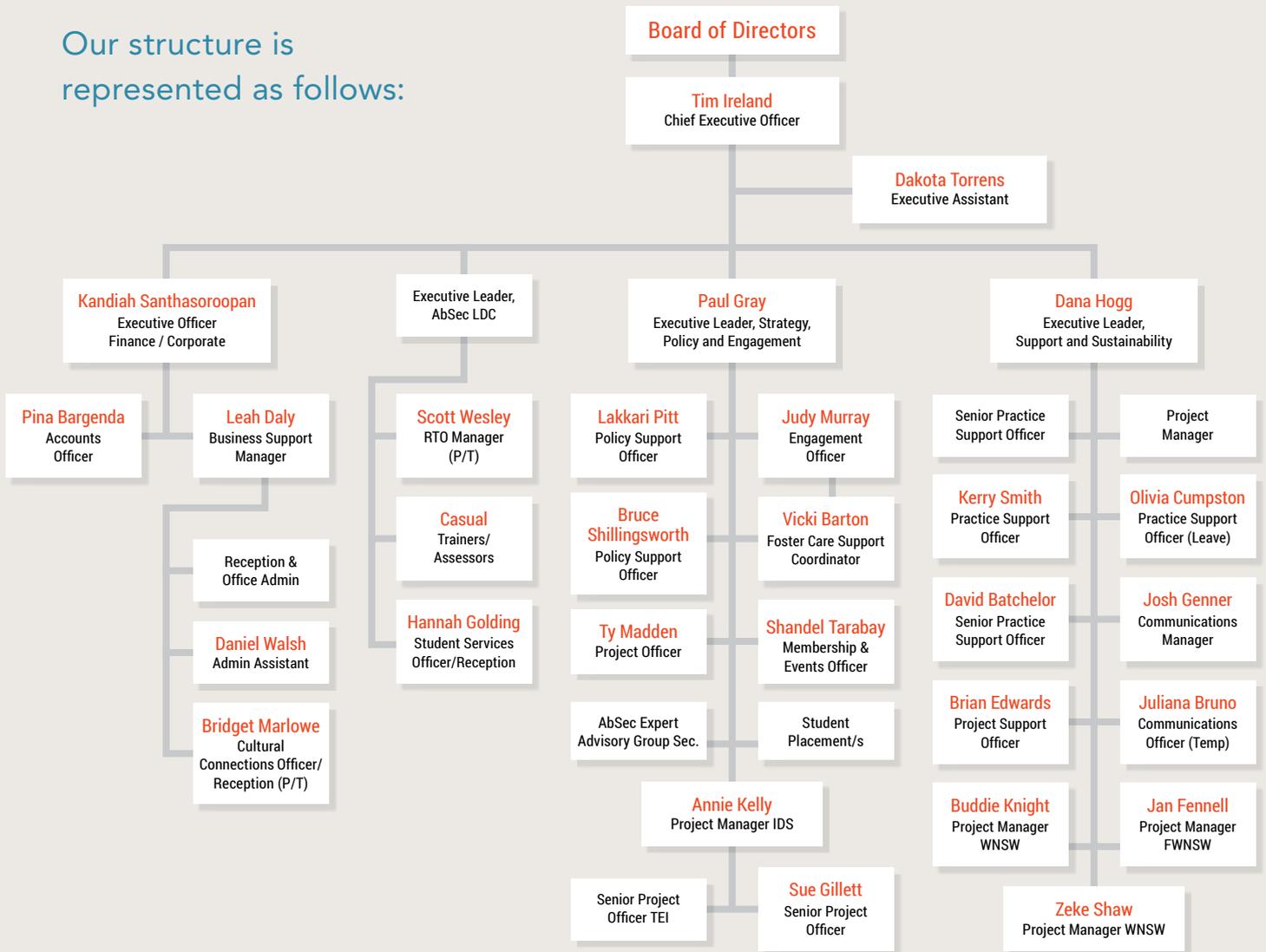
## William Henry

A Yuin Man from the South Coast of NSW, William Henry is the Chief Executive Officer of Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation and has worked in the Aboriginal service sector for over 15 years in areas ranging from health and ageing, to disabilities and governance. William was previously employed as an Aboriginal Community Development Officer with the Dental Health Service of Victoria, and Chief Executive Officer of Illaroo Co-operative Aboriginal Corporation. He was Chairman of the board for 10 years at the Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation prior to his appointment as CEO, and is the grandson of one of the founding members.

# Our People

AbSec staff are a diverse group of people, united by their commitment to our goals and values. At 30 June 2019 we had 32 members of staff, 25 of whom were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Our staff come from the Bundjalung, Wiradjuri, Kamilaroi, and other nations.

Our structure is represented as follows:



## Our Chief Executive Officer

Mr Tim Ireland is AbSec’s Chief Executive Officer reporting to the AbSec Board. He is also a member of the Board of SNAICC, the national peak body for Aboriginal children and families, as well as performs the role of Managing Director for AbSec Learning and Development Centre (AbSec LDC), our training and business arm of AbSec.

A proud Bundjalung man, Tim previously worked in several senior executive roles in the NSW Public Service, and in Aboriginal community development roles in local government. He is passionate and committed to the work of AbSec, the priorities set by the organisation and

working to realise change for our Aboriginal children, families and communities through a strong Aboriginal controlled child and family sector in NSW.

Tim holds a Bachelor of Arts from The University of Sydney, specialising in sociology, social policy, government and international relations. He is also a graduate of the NSW Public Service Commission’s Executive Development Program, a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a practitioner of PRINCE2 Project Management, and a certified Change Management Practitioner (accredited through APMG International and the Change Management Institute).

# Our Work Streams

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

These teams are supported by a Finance and Corporate Support area.



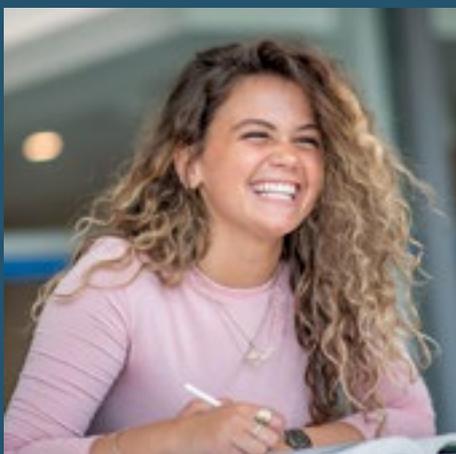
## STRATEGY, POLICY AND ENGAGEMENT

Headed up by Dr Paul Gray, a proud Wiradjuri man, this stream builds policy perspectives for the Aboriginal child and family sector, along with strategies designed to put those policies into practice. The team engages with Aboriginal people and communities across NSW and aims to advocate on their behalf, and works with our partners to achieve the change we want to see for Aboriginal children, families and communities in NSW.



## SUPPORT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Under the leadership of Ms Dana Hogg, a proud Paakantyi, Ngijaampa woman, this stream works hand-in-hand with the Aboriginal community-controlled sector in NSW, providing holistic support to build effective and sustainable Aboriginal organisations across the state to deliver quality supports for Aboriginal children, families and communities



## ABSEC LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Launched in November 2017, this area of AbSec focuses on the delivery of nationally accredited training, supporting the education of social sector workers in NSW while also operating as a business arm for AbSec to meet the growing demand for skilled workers supporting Aboriginal children, families and communities.



# OUR STRATEGY

Our priorities and direction are set out in the *Strategic Plan 2015–2018*. Building on AbSec’s strong foundations, it continues work we initiated to transform supports for our kids and families, and to voice and promote best practices that strengthen our children, young people and their communities. As an organisation, we also need to be agile and responsive to the ever-changing challenges presented to us. This means continuing to generate creative and effective ways to incorporate the voices of Aboriginal children and families in everything we do.

**Our vision**

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

## Goals and objectives

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

- ⦿ Work towards achieving self-determination for all Aboriginal people and communities, and build a safe, secure and caring environment for their children and young people, surrounded by culture;
- ⦿ Support Aboriginal organisations to deliver quality, holistic supports for all Aboriginal children, young people, families and carers;
- ⦿ Provide and support opportunities for continual learning, growth, improvement and change, for organisations delivering Aboriginal child and family supports;
- ⦿ Represent the interests, and inform government and key stakeholders of the issues facing Aboriginal children, young people, families, carers and communities;
- ⦿ Advance Aboriginal workforce development to ensure a strong and capable workforce that is ready to and equipped to meet the support needs of Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities.



## Guiding principles

Throughout our work, we embrace these values and principles:

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



## Our strategic directions

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

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

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

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

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

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION A:

## A Voice for our children, families, carers and communities

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.

### Adoption advocacy and influence

In late 2018, the NSW Government introduced changes to the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act* and the *Adoption Act*, a move that has significant implications for Aboriginal children and young people, their families and communities.

AbSec was deeply concerned about the lack of meaningful consultation with Aboriginal communities about these legislative amendments. Given the disproportionate impact of such changes on Aboriginal children and families, it's particularly important that Aboriginal people are included in developing any proposed changes. Sadly, this was not the case.

The amendments extended the grounds for dispensing with consent in adoption orders for children on guardianship orders, and imposed a two-year limit on orders and consideration for restoration. They also enabled guardianship orders by consent, and promoted

alternate dispute resolution processes, but without ensuring the necessary safeguards to address the power imbalances between families and statutory authorities. These are necessary for full participation and free, prior and informed consent in these important decisions.

AbSec wrote to Minister Goward about these concerns, and along with our friends at the NSW Community Legal Services and UTS Jumbunna, led a public campaign against these changes. We were unable to prevent the legislation from being rushed through the Parliament, however we were successful in raising awareness about these issues to support our ongoing efforts to strengthen safeguards for Aboriginal families. More than 15,000 people joined our petition to protect Aboriginal children from being permanently separated from their family, community and culture through adoption orders.



## The Best Care for Kids is Community

In response to changes in the Adoption Act, AbSec launched our flagship public campaign, *The best care for kids is community*, celebrating the strength of our families and communities in caring for our kids. We know that the only way to improve outcomes for all Aboriginal children and young people and overcome the legacy of colonisation is to empower Aboriginal communities and strengthen Aboriginal families through Aboriginal healing approaches. We were able to do this with the support of key organisations such as CAGES Foundation, SNOW Foundation, Collins-Gattrell, and the unwavering support from our members and communities. We outlined and advocated for three key pillars of an effective Aboriginal child and family system, including:

1. Establishing an empowered Aboriginal Child and Family Commission
2. Building a strong, holistic Aboriginal child and family services sector, and
3. Investing in responsive, Aboriginal-led support for Aboriginal children and families.

AbSec's campaign will continue into 2020, joining with other local and national campaigns to advocate for systemic change that empowers Aboriginal communities.



## Towards Aboriginal-led solutions

In 2018/19, AbSec continued to advocate for Aboriginal-led solutions as the most effective way to support Aboriginal children and families to thrive. We continued our engagement with FACS regarding the Aboriginal Case Management Policy, and advocated for an Aboriginal commissioning framework to enable investment in Aboriginal-led approaches.

Last year, we reported on the significant work AbSec had undertaken alongside Aboriginal organisations and communities to develop the state's first ever Aboriginal Case Management Policy. Aboriginal community controlled child and family organisations guided this work from start to finish, and more than 300 stakeholders, including Aboriginal young people, carers, families and practitioners, government agencies and non-government organisations contributed to its development.

In late 2018, FACS endorsed the Aboriginal Case Management Policy and adopted it as official policy. In early 2019, the accompanying Rules and Practice Guidance, which operationalise the policy into practice, were also endorsed and adopted by FACS. This represented a key achievement from the *Plan on a Page for Aboriginal Children and Young People 2015–2021*,



with the development of a focused policy developed by and for Aboriginal communities.

Our attention now turns to implementation. Work has already commenced on mapping implementation readiness across the state, with the aim of developing localised plans driven by partnerships between Aboriginal communities and FACS. AbSec will continue to support this implementation ensuring that the voices of our members and communities drive the Aboriginal Case Management Policy forward.



## An Aboriginal Commissioning Approach

In May 2018, AbSec released *An Aboriginal Commissioning Approach to Aboriginal Child and Family Services in NSW: A conceptual design*, outlining a commissioning framework to direct investment according to Aboriginal community priorities. The Aboriginal commissioning framework outlined the establishment of an Aboriginal cross-sector statutory body to direct investment towards achieving the goals and aspirations of Aboriginal people. This approach represents a genuinely new way forward for NSW, going beyond the existing “consultation” and “participation” paradigms that have ultimately failed to meaningfully empower Aboriginal communities.

## Advocacy and influence

It has been another busy year for reforms, and AbSec has worked hard to represent our stakeholders through formal submissions and feedback on various initiatives that impact on Aboriginal children and young people, families and communities. Some key submissions have included:

- ⊙ AbSec’s CEO, Tim Ireland, appeared before the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs to provide evidence for the Inquiry into Local Adoption, alongside our colleagues from SNAICC and the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation
- ⊙ AbSec made a detailed submission to the Access System Redesign (now System Transformation) project, a key initiative of Their Futures Matter. The Their Futures Matter reforms are a significant suite of changes that seek to fundamentally shift the way that the child and family system operates for children and families. AbSec advocated for a principle-based approach to Aboriginal child and family services, an approach grounded in self-determination, and to drive holistic, community-based solutions. We also provided detailed feedback on the Aboriginal Client Voice Methodology and the Futures Planning and Support framework, emphasising the need to more broadly consider the objectives and scope of how Aboriginal voices are heard in policy design and service delivery
- ⊙ We participated in a FACS Aboriginal Knowledge Project, urging for an Indigenous Data Sovereignty approach and Aboriginal ownership and control of data about our children, families and communities. AbSec will continue to advocate for data approaches that uphold our collective rights, acknowledging that data is critical to our self-governance and self-determination.

Throughout 2018/19, we engaged with FACS about this model, and the opportunity presented by ongoing reforms to the broader government commissioning approach. Through these discussions, we secured a commitment from FACS to trial an Aboriginal commissioning approach through AbSec in 2019/20. This project will include the establishment of an AbSec commissioning unit, and the co-design and commissioning of a community-led Guardianship Support Model in two communities. This model is intended to ensure that there are Aboriginal community supports available to Aboriginal children and young people placed on guardianship orders.

- ⊙ AbSec participated in a process to review the current status of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in Australia. We raised our deep concerns that current systems are failing Aboriginal children, noting ongoing trends towards permanent care orders that fail to adequately safeguard the rights of Aboriginal children and young people; their right to ongoing supports, their right to periodic review of their placement, and their right to family, community and culture.
- ⊙ AbSec was pleased to be able to give an opportunity to one of our Youth Ambassadors to address the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, raising issues about out-of-home care and ongoing supports for Aboriginal children and young people.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION B:

## Support for the Aboriginal sector

Our Aboriginal sector is strong, sustainable and capable to cater for the needs of our children, families, carers and communities; and is supported to provide more holistic responses.

### Supporting our Aboriginal Child and Family Organisations

As the NSW Aboriginal child and family peak organisation, AbSec continues to invest in supporting the Aboriginal child and family sector. In 2018/19, we delivered over 1,800 hours of face to face and group support for Aboriginal organisations, providing guidance and expertise to enhance their practice. This support has focused on many aspects of organisational development, including:

- ⦿ Supporting agencies with the development of action plans to address practice and organisational issues and assisting with the monitoring of these plans.
- ⦿ Governance, organisational capacity and growth
- ⦿ Accreditation issues and

- ⦿ Stakeholder relationships and district engagement.

AbSec continued to support partnership agencies with development and monitoring for transition plans, as well as provide general support with the development of policies and other resources required for accreditation as a standalone Aboriginal organisation. Unfortunately there are some partnerships that have not progressed despite support and at times extensive support from AbSec.

Our work in addressing NSW's service system gap has continued, with AbSec engaging with FACS to support the growth of stand-alone Aboriginal child and family organisations in both Western NSW and Far Western NSW.



## Developing our NSW Aboriginal safety-net

AbSec has continued its work with FACs in developing the Aboriginal Industry Development Strategy. The strategy provides a roadmap to strengthen the Aboriginal child and family services sector in NSW, with an emphasis on building the sector to a scale which can achieve an integrated state-wide safety-net. Whilst the \$15 million strategy was not funded in full, the funded elements that AbSec delivered in 2018/19 include:

⊙ Clarifying the different roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) capacity building. To this end, AbSec hosted a workshop in June with Aboriginal agencies, FACS, NSW Office of the Children's Guardian and NSW Ombudsman.

⊙ Supporting the development of locally directed workforce plans contributing to a state-wide workforce strategy. AbSec hosted 12 sessions in Feb and March to gather information about local and state-wide challenges in building an Aboriginal workforce. They focused on strategies to attract, recruit, retain and upskill Aboriginal practitioners across the continuum of support.

Moving forward, information from these sessions will be developed into regionalised workforce development plans and a state-wide workforce development strategy. Feedback on draft strategies is expected to be finalised August 2019.

## Enabling a Connected Aboriginal Sector for Aboriginal Children and Families

The challenges experienced by the Aboriginal child and family sector this financial year have reinforced the need for us to be strong and connected. To that end, AbSec continued its work in providing opportunities for the sector to come together, share knowledge and expertise, and plan for our future.

In the reporting period, AbSec hosted 5 Aboriginal agency forums and 2 members' forums. The forums were each attended by 8 Aboriginal agencies, with topics covered including engagement with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, TEI and Disability services program updates, the FACS Pre-natal Policy

review and research project collaborations. The member's forums on average were attended by 10 members, out of our total 65 member agencies. They covered topics including the Aboriginal Child and Investment Strategy, cultural connections workshops, permanency support program implementation programs and transition in out-of-home care.

AbSec also provided support to intensive family services, bringing together practitioners in multi-systemic therapy and functional family therapy, allowing those who work in intensive family services to share knowledge, experience and skills to enhance best practice.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION C:

## Securing partners and resources

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.



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

### Boosting Cultural Connections Workshops

Last year, AbSec developed and launched Cultural Connections, a one-day intensive training program to help child protection practitioners' support kids in their care to maintain and strengthen their cultural connections. Off the back of extensive positive feedback, the program continued into 2018/19, with AbSec running over 30 workshops for over 360 practitioners and sector stakeholders across the state. Travelling from Albury to Lismore, Bourke to Nowra and Tamworth to Sydney,

the workshops offer a deep learning experience for attendees, who walk away from the workshop with new skills in creating meaningful Cultural Care Plans and Cultural Support Plans.

In February 2019, AbSec responded to overwhelming demand from those in the early intervention space, by launching the Targeted Early Intervention Cultural Connections workshops (TEI workshops). The TEI workshops were funded by FACS and tailored to support funded TEI services to better engage with local Aboriginal communities and improve services to Aboriginal children and their families. Overwhelmingly these workshops have revealed the extent to which those working in early intervention are in need of culturally appropriate training in how to engage with Aboriginal communities.

AbSec is seeking funding to build an evaluation tool for the Cultural Connections training, one which will allow us to measure the full extent to which cultural gaps are being closed by this program. Effective measurement of how well NSW is doing in keeping Aboriginal kids and young people in out-of-home care connected to culture, will allow agencies, both internal and external, to be held accountable for their practices. It will also assist AbSec to measure and improve the effectiveness of training provided to the sector.



## Relations Through Events

AbSec continues to grow from strength to strength in its engagement with communities and sector partners through events. This year AbSec was again proud to host our annual Family Fun Day during NAIDOC week. The day was an amazing opportunity for all communities to come together, share cultural activities, arts and crafts and our NAIDOC cake celebration. It was a huge success with 1,000 people gathering at Steel Park in Marrickville to celebrate our history, culture and achievements. We also donated brand new jerseys to Hammondville Public School and 700 overnight bags to Sarah Redfern High School in support of their community NAIDOC days.

Supporting initiatives that centre Aboriginal children, and which celebrate Aboriginal culture and achievements,

remains an important part of our event engagement strategy. In January, AbSec joined one of Australia's largest celebrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survival and culture at the Yuban Festival. The team provided festival go-ers the opportunity to engage with what's happening in the sector by live-streaming a talk with our head of policy, Dr Paul Gray, about changes to child protection law, and a talk with AbSec Youth Ambassador, Jennah Dungay, about growing up in the out-of-home care sector. We collected signatures for *The best care for kids is community* campaign and handed out free hats, keyrings and more. We hope to see many of you again in 2019/2020 as we continue our work across the state.



## A sector report card

February this year marked the 11th anniversary of the National Apology to Stolen Generations. In support of important advocacy being done by Stolen Generation organisations, AbSec observed the anniversary with the release of our second FACS report card. The report card measured the performance of FACS against seven indicators for Aboriginal kids receiving child protection services.

Using the most recent data available, it found that FACS was failing in five out of seven measures, with the number of Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care continuing to rise.

Significant figures included:

⊙ 7,152 Aboriginal children were in out-of-home care as at 30 June 2017. This was an increase of 2.6% compared to the previous year.

⊙ 18,200 Aboriginal children were reported at risk of significant harm – an increase of 6.7% compared to the previous year.

⊙ 5,580 Aboriginal children were receiving intensive family support. This has fallen by 3%.

AbSec media outreach surrounding the report card emphasised that unless governments pursue a new approach, the number of Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care is expected to triple over the next 20 years. The report card was used to call on governments to put an immediate end to the old failed policies of permanent removal, and to embrace Aboriginal-led solutions as part of a rights-based Aboriginal child and family system. The full report card can be found on the AbSec website.

## Partnerships for Impact

Partnering with organisations that share our vision is crucial to success in the Aboriginal child and family sector. With many organisations and players in this space, partnering allows us to support the positive work that's happening around the state, communicate our messages and policy asks with a broader network, and to increase the scope of our impact. Partnering also offers opportunity in terms of diversifying AbSec's revenue streams, something we will continue to explore into the new financial year.

The changes to adoption legislation was a deep rallying moment for our sector, one which brought together a coalition of partners in an effort to oppose the changes. We released a joint position statement with 9 other Aboriginal community bodies, and community legal advocates, including Save the Children, Benevolent Society, Public Interest Advocacy Centre and the Aboriginal Legal Service, calling on the NSW Government to reconsider the progress of amendments and allow for meaningful public engagement and consultation. We worked in close partnership especially with community legal centres to run our petition around legislative changes.

In the lead up to the NSW state election, AbSec joined a coalition of 18 peak bodies asking all political parties to prioritise building great communities for a fairer NSW. The Building Great Communities campaign strengthened our connection to others in the NSW community sector, despite the campaign struggling to become a driving force in the election.

AbSec hosted two roundtable events with partners in the past year, including one to share our election platform with regulators and Aboriginal organisations in the lead up to the NSW election, and another with legal advocates to consult on legislative safeguards for Aboriginal kids. We will continue to work with these organisations into the New Year.

While our focus remains on our own NSW Aboriginal communities, our international relationships continue to be an ongoing source of energy and ideas. Building on our strong existing connections with New Zealand, in September 2018 we attended the Te Pou Matakana conference, following Te Whānau O Waipareira's CEO, John Tamihere, attending our AbSec conference in late 2017. The experience of visiting their member organisations and hearing about their commissioning framework and data infrastructure has informed our own commissioning framework and outcomes work.

We also attended and spoke at the National Indian Child Welfare Conference in New Mexico, USA. This was a return visit after Dr. Sarah Kastelic visited AbSec in 2017 to discuss learnings across our work. We visited tribal courts and learnt about therapeutic programs run by tribes to better understand how other First Nations people are exercising self-determination.





# STRATEGIC DIRECTION D:

## Organisational strength and sustainability

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



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

### Corporate change

This financial year saw the implementation of significant changes to our constitution, as we moved from an Association to an Aboriginal Corporation registered with the Office of the Registration of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). The reason for this change, outlined in last year's annual report, was to future proof the organisation, allowing it to be fully responsive to future demands and provide more opportunities for it to deliver for our communities.

Coming into effect in August 2018, these changes consequently meant changes to our membership model, as we've moved from having nine different kinds of membership, to four. Our four membership categories comprise of two organisational categories and two individual categories, with members in any category needing to demonstrate support for the aims and objectives of the Corporation:

**Category A** — Aboriginal Organisations being Aboriginal-controlled organisation delivering early intervention, family support, child protection and out of home care and related services

**Category B** — Aboriginal Individuals being Aboriginal people recognised by the community

**Category C** — Other Organisations being any other organisation not deemed to fall under Category A

**Category D** — Other Individuals being other individuals not deemed to fall under Category B

The new legal standing also saw us change the composition of our board, bringing on more stakeholders to have an active voice in AbSec's governance.



## AbSec Learning and Development Centre

AbSec Learning and Development Centre has continued to rollout training to organisations and individuals across NSW and beyond. We currently have approximately 50 students completing the Diploma of Child Youth and Family Intervention and a further 20 students completing the Diploma of Leadership and Management. We have recently enrolled our first student in the Diploma of Business (Governance), this Diploma is specifically designed for CEO and Boards of NFP Aboriginal controlled organisations. Our students are predominantly from NSW, we do however have students in Queensland, Victoria and New Zealand.

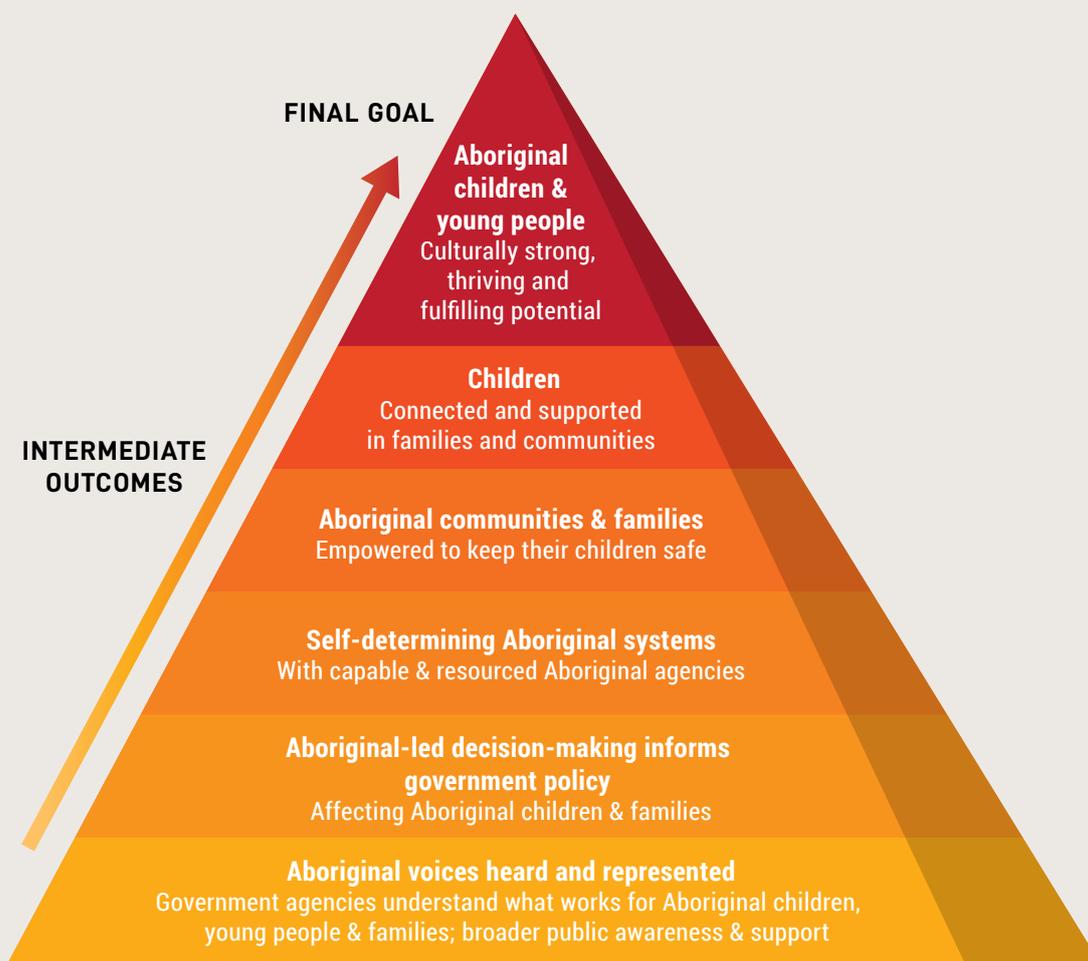
In 2018 AbSec LDC partnered with QATSICC to deliver the Family Led Decision Making program across

Queensland to 150 employees from a range of Aboriginal Health and Community Services organisations. Prompted by the success of this program, AbSec LDC has recently submitted an application for a funding contract with the Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, and we await the outcome of this application. Unfortunately apart from small funding allocations from NSW FACS, AbSec LDC remains excluded from the NSW Smart and Skilled program and despite repeated attempts has been unable to secure funding to support the delivery of training from other NSW Government departments



## The Theory of Change

AbSec's Theory of Change is represented as follows:



For AbSec, our Theory of Change means that we see Aboriginal children and young people culturally strong, thriving and fulfilling their potential. It means that AbSec adopts a holistic approach to ensure Aboriginal children are raised strong in spirit and identity, with every opportunity for lifelong wellbeing and connection to culture.

For this to occur, evidence shows that Aboriginal children must be connected and supported in their families, kinship groups and communities. Families and communities must also be empowered to keep their children safe. Self-determination is at the base of fostering sustainable change. AbSec advocates for Aboriginal-led services and social systems, with Aboriginal agencies that are capable and resourced.

To reach this outcome, Aboriginal voices must be heard and represented in society, leading to broad community awareness and government policy that is based on Aboriginal-led decision-making about what works best for Aboriginal children, young people and families.

AbSec's Theory of Change captures the organisation's vision, and sets the foundation for the change we want to see as the NSW Aboriginal child and family peak organisation. It establishes the framework to understand our work and how it contributes to the final goal we want for Aboriginal children and young people in NSW. AbSec will continue embedding this Theory in its next strategic planning cycle. This work is still undertaken to form our logic for delivering better outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people.

## The New Strategic Plan, New Strategic Directions

AbSec's Strategic Plan 2019–2022 outlines the steps taken to achieve our vision and objective for Aboriginal children and young people, their families and communities. AbSec committed to the pursuit of four core strategic directions for the next cycle:



### **STRATEGIC DIRECTION A: Our Aboriginal children, families and communities are at the centre.**

We must place the perspective of our Aboriginal children, families and communities at the centre of everything we do. This will create a culturally rich and grounded focus for the priorities we establish as an Aboriginal child and family peak organisation.



### **STRATEGIC DIRECTION B: Our Aboriginal organisations deliver quality for our children, families and communities.**

Aboriginal organisations are critical to the success of Aboriginal-led, designed and delivered approaches to supporting Aboriginal children, families and communities. Our aim is to build and strengthen our Aboriginal-controlled sector, providing tools to cultivate genuine Aboriginal-led solutions that are creative and forward-thinking, and will deliver better outcomes for our children and their families.



### **STRATEGIC DIRECTION C: Our partnerships will benefit our Aboriginal children and families.**

Strategic and targeted partnerships are critical to ensuring our message as a peak body is widely communicated, shared and readily understood. As we work to improve the support provided to Aboriginal children and families by Aboriginal organisations, it is imperative that we look towards, and engage with new and innovative partners including service deliverers, philanthropists, the corporate sector and different government agencies.



### **STRATEGIC DIRECTION D: Our organisation is best placed to represent our stakeholders.**

The success of the first three strategic directions and their associated priorities stand on the strength of AbSec as an organisation. Our organisational systems, processes and governance, must be sound and robust; our values, beliefs, behaviours and reputation be above reproach; and our people equipped and mobilised. This will ensure we are well positioned and ready to truly represent and deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities.

# FINANCIALS



## A MESSAGE FROM THE Treasurer

AbSec - NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation remains in a sound financial position. At the end of 2018/19, AbSec has a total equity of \$3,947,357 up 89.52 % from 2017/18. The main reasons for this increase are revaluation of Land & building and Surplus for the year. A F Walls and Co Chartered Accountants have issued an unqualified report following their independent audit of AbSec's accounts. AbSec has continued to pursue more diverse revenue streams, including engagement with the philanthropic sector to enable AbSec to further its reach in line with our objectives and mandate. I encourage our stakeholders to take a look at our consolidated financial report for the year.

AbSec's Learning and Development Centre continues to develop, contributing \$43,712 of revenue to AbSec while strengthening the sector workforce. The first full year of Cultural Connections workshops likewise resulted in \$141,582 of revenue in addition to strengthening cultural planning practice within the sector.

AbSec continues to pursue opportunities to strengthen the sustainability of the organisation through activities that also contribute to our mission and objectives, that

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.

AbSec's consistent financial management provides a strong foundation to realise our vision. As we move to 2019/20, AbSec will further evolve and grow to better meet the needs of Aboriginal children, families and communities, including through the administration of an Aboriginal commissioning framework. Over the coming period, the sustainability of the Corporation will be a particular focus for AbSec in order that we continue doing the vital work needed for our Aboriginal kids and families. I would like to acknowledge the dedication of all those involved in achieving these results, and acknowledge the contribution of Suzanne Naden as Board member and previous Treasurer of AbSec.

**Garry Matthews**

TREASURER

# BALANCE SHEET

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30TH JUNE, 2019

	ECONOMIC ENTITY		CHIEF ENTITY	
	2019 \$	2018 \$	2019 \$	2018 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>				
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Cash Assets	4,586,911	2,309,212	4,433,791	2,287,932
Receivables	71,912	25,956	90,872	46,409
Other Assets	11,430	3,820	11,430	3,820
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>4,670,253</b>	<b>2,338,988</b>	<b>4,536,093</b>	<b>2,338,161</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Property, Plant and Equipment	2,651,857	1,206,766	2,651,857	1,206,766
Investments	-	-	70,000	70,000
Intangibles	69,999	69,999	-	-
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>2,721,856</b>	<b>1,276,765</b>	<b>2,721,857</b>	<b>1,276,766</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>7,392,109</b>	<b>3,615,753</b>	<b>7,257,950</b>	<b>3,614,927</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>				
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>				
Payables	299,191	58,643	292,990	58,643
Current Tax Liabilities	309,656	181,449	281,260	182,121
Provisions	161,416	116,151	161,416	116,151
Other Liabilities	2,631,904	1,153,408	2,604,536	1,153,408
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>3,402,167</b>	<b>1,509,651</b>	<b>3,340,202</b>	<b>1,510,323</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>				
Provisions	42,585	23,268	42,585	23,268
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>42,585</b>	<b>23,268</b>	<b>42,585</b>	<b>23,268</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>3,444,752</b>	<b>1,532,919</b>	<b>3,382,787</b>	<b>1,533,591</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>3,947,357</b>	<b>2,082,834</b>	<b>3,875,163</b>	<b>2,081,336</b>
<b>MEMBERS' EQUITY</b>				
Reserve	1,293,305	-	1,293,305	-
Opening Balance-Retained Earnings	2,082,834	2,327,824	2,081,336	2,327,824
Current Year Surplus/(Deficit)	571,218	(244,990)	500,522	(246,488)
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS' EQUITY</b>	<b>3,947,357</b>	<b>2,082,834</b>	<b>3,875,163</b>	<b>2,081,336</b>

Our Audited Financial Statements (Report) for the year ended 30 June 2019 is available upon request. The Report provides an account of the management of the organisations and its subsidiary company, AbSec Learning and Development Centre. It also provides details in respect of the Financial Performance and Financial Position, among other things. The Report demonstrates that AbSec is in good financial health with a strong cash position to meet any of its obligations in the future.



AbSec



2018  
2019



# GET INVOLVED IN OUR WORK

There are many ways to support the important work being done by AbSec for Aboriginal children, families and communities. No matter who you are or the size of your contribution, we appreciate all who bring us closer towards our goals.

---

## JOIN OUR ONLINE COMMUNITY

Like and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to stay up-to-date and share your thoughts.

 @AbSecNSW & @AbSecLDC

 @AbSecNSW

 @AbSec (NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation)

---

## JOIN ABSEC AS A MEMBER

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

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

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

---

## JOIN THE BEST CARE FOR KIDS IS COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

*The best care for kids is community* is a state-wide NSW campaign to promote the importance of family, community and culture in supporting the best interests of Aboriginal children and young people. As an AbSec-run campaign it advocates for greater consultation and engagement with Aboriginal communities about changes to the child protection system, and the need to end the removal and adoption of Aboriginal children out of community and culture

Join the campaign by signing the petition at [www.absec.org.au/sign](http://www.absec.org.au/sign) and we'll keep you updated on future opportunities to be involved.

---

## JOIN THE FAMILY MATTERS CAMPAIGN

*Family Matters: Strong Communities, Strong Culture, Stronger Children* is Australia's national campaign to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture. The campaign is led by national peak body SNAICC, and governed by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group, providing the expertise and authority to truly effect change.

The Family Matters campaign is supported by a strategic alliance of more than 150 organisations, academics and prominent educational institutions who share the campaign's vision and are committed to eliminating the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2040.

AbSec coordinates the NSW Family Matters Collective, made up of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations. We welcome organisations to sign up as members, and individuals to join our mailing list to keep up-to-date on campaign initiatives. Visit [absec.org.au/familymatters.php](http://absec.org.au/familymatters.php) to find out more.

---

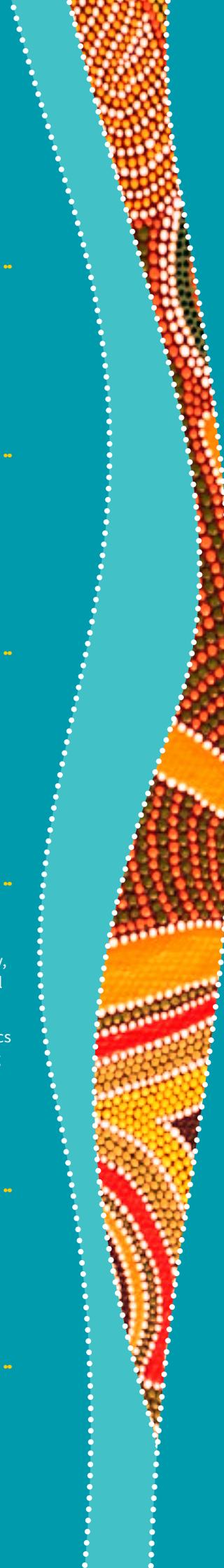
## PARTNER WITH US

Partnering with AbSec is a rewarding way to fulfil your business' corporate social responsibility goals while boosting team morale and engagement. We can work with you to design a partnership model that meets your needs and provides mutual benefits, or you can join our monthly giving program for a simple but powerful way to make a difference. AbSec values each and every partner. Please get in touch by calling **(02) 9559 5299** or emailing [admin@absec.org.au](mailto:admin@absec.org.au).

---

## SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

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





**AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community  
Peak Aboriginal Corporation (ICN 8926)**

21 Carrington Road, Marrickville NSW 2204

Phone: (02) 9559 5299

E-mail: [admin@absec.org.au](mailto:admin@absec.org.au)

Website: [www.absec.org.au](http://www.absec.org.au)

Facebook: [@AbSecNSW](https://www.facebook.com/AbSecNSW)

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