



## MEDIA RELEASE

# New Office for Youth could lead to better engagement—if implemented effectively

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AbSec, the peak organisation advocating for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, and communities in New South Wales, has welcomed NSW Minister for Youth, Rose Jackson's announcement of a brand new Office for Youth.

In a letter to stakeholders, the Minister provided details of the Office, which will be led by the Advocate for Children and Young People.

*"We're cutting through the bureaucracy, meeting young people where they are as a priority. We are committed to turning consultation into action and engagement into impact so young people can speak truth to power,"* the Minister wrote.

On paper, this signals a positive move that could dramatically improve how the Government works with young people, but only if it's prepared to listen to and act on what young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are saying.

*"We welcome this step from the Minister, but what's clear is that young people—especially Aboriginal young people—have been saying for years that the current systems are failing them. Their voices must not only be heard, but must guide the way forward,"* said AbSec CEO, John Leha.

*"Good intentions must lead to tangible outcomes. The focus needs to shift to accountability, action and transparency in how decisions are made with—not for—our our young people,"* said Mr Leha.

With more details about the new Office yet to be released, AbSec has renewed its push for the establishment of an Aboriginal Youth Peak Body.

*"Aboriginal children and young people cannot be an afterthought—they must be at the heart of this new Office. Their lived experience, their insight, their leadership must shape the agenda from the outset,"* said John Leha.

*"We continue to see an overwhelmingly disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people caught in flawed state systems—kids removed from families into out-of-home care, or appearing in courts and prosecuted as adults, for example, is evidence that representation is needed.*

*"An independent, community-controlled Aboriginal Youth Peak Body is needed, and it's imperative that it formally partners with the new Office for Youth,"* said Mr Leha.

The purpose of this proposed body would provide:

- Representation for Aboriginal young people across NSW.
- Leadership on culturally safe, self-determined engagement.
- A clear channel for policy input and advocacy.
- An equal working partnership with government—not as a consultant, but as a co-leader.
- Alignment with Closing the Gap Priority Reform 4.



Please direct all media inquiries to the  
AbSec Communications Team at [media@absec.org.au](mailto:media@absec.org.au)

Chris Beaumont  
PR & Communications Coordinator

[Chris.Beaumont@absec.org.au](mailto:Chris.Beaumont@absec.org.au)  
**0422 943 812**

**AbSec is the peak organisation dedicated to the welfare of Aboriginal children, young people and families in New South Wales.**

We advocate for the rights of our little ones and youth to provide crucial support to families, carers and communities. 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.