



AbSec

NSW Child, Family & Community
Peak Aboriginal Corporation

MEDIA RELEASE

absec.org.au

STRICTLY EMBARGOED until 7am AEDT, 26 February 2026

AbSec launches Know Your Rights: empowering Aboriginal families navigating the NSW child protection system

AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation – is proud to launch *Know Your Rights*, a groundbreaking online resource built by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families navigating the NSW child protection system.

The Know Your Rights website provides practical guidance, stories guided by lived experience, and resources to help parents be informed, confident, and empowered. The website includes information guides, videos and animations to equip families at critical moments – when a child could be removed, when a child has been removed, and key contacts families need. It provides step-by-step explanations of each stage in the child protection process, options for what families can do at each step, voices and experiences of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, and journals for creating evidence through documentation.

AbSec CEO John Leha said Know Your Rights responds directly to what families have been telling us for years. "Time and again, our families report being denied information about their rights and told they're powerless within the system. Know Your Rights changes that by empowering families with the knowledge, tools, and community voices they need to engage with a system that has disempowered them for too long."

The research reveals a stark reality: over the past decade, Aboriginal children placed in out-of-home care has increased 48% in NSW, with less than half returning to their parents. The NSW reunification rate is the lowest of any state or territory in Australia. Despite the NSW Department of Communities and Justice stating that restoration is a priority, Aboriginal families experience a different reality. Once children are on final care orders, restoration is highly unlikely, particularly for children who enter care under two years of age.

Know Your Rights is grounded in the *Bring Them Home, Keep Them Home* research led by UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre – the first Aboriginal-led research into the reunification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Created directly from the voices and experiences of Aboriginal parents and families who have navigated the child protection system, this resource embodies genuine community co-design and self-determination.

Lead researcher, Associate Professor BJ Newton said the research revealed the urgent need for families to have accessible information about their rights. "In Australia, Aboriginal children are 10 times more likely to be removed than other children. The system targets Aboriginal families, and once children enter care it is very difficult to get them back home. Through the research we know there are many children in care that should not have been removed, and there are many families desperately trying to get their children home. Know Your Rights arms Aboriginal families and their supporters with the

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knowledge needed to navigate and the child protection system. It is one way to shift the power imbalance between child protection systems and Aboriginal families and communities". A Prof Newton continued, "advocating for Aboriginal rights and justice through research that genuinely serves communities has been at the heart of my work and Know Your Rights represents what's possible when research is led by and with Aboriginal families."

The voices of Aboriginal families resonate through this initiative. Parents who participated in the research shared powerful truths about their experiences. One parent said: "They make you believe that they can do whatever they want, and you've got no rights. I still to this day don't even know my rights. No one actually has ever told me what my rights were." Another parent's words reflect the resilience at the heart of this resource: "Stand up for yourself, you're allowed to push for what you want... you really have to speak up even if you don't get anywhere at least you've pushed for it." Another mother reflected on how Know Your Rights would have made a difference during her experience with the NSW child protection system, "I had no idea the rights I had, but I do now, and I really hope that Know Your Rights will make a difference to other families. If I had something like Know Your Rights available for me back then, maybe, just maybe, my girls could have had more of their childhood protected from the system, they could have been raised together, and they would both carry less emotional scars from the many years that were taken from them. My girls had the right to be raised together, and we had the right to be supported to be safe together."

AbSec is officially launching Know Your Rights at the Quarterly Sector Forum in Dubbo on 26 February, placing it at the heart of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family sector. Launching in this space reflects what Know Your Rights stands for: sector-led, community-driven, and grounded in the lived experiences of families and frontline workers. Forum attendees will be introduced to the website and its supporting animations, videos, and guides, exploring how these resources can be used in everyday practice to support and educate parents and families about their rights.

The AbSec team and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations across the state will roll out the resources through the Sector Forum, a range of local events and roadshows, ensuring families across the state are aware of, and can access, the resources and information they need.

Visit www.kyr.org.au to access the information guides and stay connected with project updates.

About AbSec

AbSec is the peak Aboriginal organisation in NSW dedicated to empowering Aboriginal communities by advocating for the rights, safety, and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, young people and families. We build strength and resilience by supporting community-led solutions, shaping policy, and driving reforms that ensure every Aboriginal child and young person grows up strong in culture and identity.

Notes for Editors

About the *Bring Them Home, Keep Them Home* Research

The *Bring Them Home, Keep Them Home* (BTHKTH) research is a four-year Aboriginal-led research project investigating the rates, outcomes, and experiences of successful and sustainable restoration for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. Led by Associate Professor BJ Newton, a proud Wiradjuri woman and Scientia Associate Professor at UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre, the research is conducted in partnership with Aboriginal organisations including AbSec, Waminda, South Coast

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Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation, and Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation. The research facilitates truth-telling from families silenced by the system and supports Aboriginal community-determined initiatives and system-level change. It is funded by the Australian Research Council.

About the Partner Organisations

Know Your Rights is a powerful collaboration between AbSec, Waminda South Coast Women's Health & Wellbeing Aboriginal Corporation, South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation, UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre, Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited, and the University of Technology Sydney. Born from Waminda's vision, this partnership ensures the resource reflects the lived experiences of Aboriginal families while providing them with the tools and support networks needed to navigate the system and fight for their children.

Know Your Rights is delivered through a collaboration of seven organisations:

- **AbSec** – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation – Lead organisation
- **UNSW Social Policy Research Centre** – Lead research partner
- **Waminda** – South Coast Women's Health & Wellbeing Aboriginal Corporation (originator of the resource concept)
- **South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation**
- **Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation**
- **Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited**
- **University of Technology Sydney**

Key Statistics

- Over the past decade, Aboriginal children placed in out-of-home care has **increased 48% in NSW**
- **Less than 50%** of Aboriginal children in care return to their birth parents
- NSW reunification rate is just **15.2% for every 1,000 Aboriginal children** – the lowest of any state or territory in Australia
- Aboriginal children are **10 times more likely** to be removed than other children in Australia
- Children who enter care **under two years of age have extremely low restoration rates.**

Access to Resources

Through the *Bring Them Home, Keep Them Home* research, the *Know Your Rights* website includes:

- How the system should be working and what DCJ should be doing
- Aboriginal community and parents' rights embedded in laws and policies
- What each step in the child protection system is and what this means
- Options for what you can do at each step in the system
- Voices and experiences of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents
- Journals for creating your own evidence through documentation.

Information guides and resources are available for download at www.kyr.org.au including:

- Guide 1: I'm worried my child could be removed
- Guide 2: Key contacts when involved with child protection

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- Guide 3: My child has been removed.

Visual Assets (available to media upon request)

- Campaign animations (family stories and system explainers)
- Information guide covers and sample pages
- Partner organisation logos
- Photography from Quarterly Sector Forum launch (available post-26 February)

The full interactive website www.kyr.org.au will be live on 26 February 2026 with expanded resources, journals, and documentation tools.

Interview and Case Study Opportunities

Available for media interviews and case studies **upon request**:

- **Associate Professor BJ Newton** – Lead Researcher, UNSW Social Policy Research Centre (research findings, restoration outcomes, family experiences)
- **Kimberly Chiswell | Child Protection Practice Specialist** – AbSec NSW (AbSec policy, family experiences)
- **Lisa Wellington, Chief Executive Leader**, Waminda South Coast Women's Health & Wellbeing Aboriginal Corporation
- Quotes from parents who have been part of the Bring them Home, Keep Them Home research can be provided. These will be de-identified.

All interviews can be arranged through AbSec's media contact. Parents and families will be supported throughout the interview process with appropriate cultural and emotional support, and anonymity will be maintained as required.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this resource and related materials may contain references to child removal and experiences that may be distressing.

For media enquiries: Kristjan Porm, Communications and Memberships Manager | media@absec.org.au | 0402 158 726

Visuals available to media

Know Your Rights branding and artwork

[Brittney Angus](#) is a proud Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal designer, based on Wodi Wodi (Dharawal Speaking) Country, whose work spans branding, illustration and digital design. The title of the Know Your Rights artwork is 'Ripple Effect of Knowledge.' This artwork represents how knowledge shared with one person creates a ripple that spreads across family, community, and Country.

Know Your Rights illustrations

[Charlotte Allingham](#) is a highly accomplished Aboriginal artist hailing from the Wiradjuri and Ngiyampaa communities, with deep familial connections to the Condobolin and Ivanhoe regions of Central West NSW.

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