



AbSec

NSW Child, Family & Community
Peak Aboriginal Corporation

MEDIA RELEASE

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Empowering young mob to lead: AbSec and MAYCS bring youth voices to the centre of out-of-home care reform

AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation and Mouny Aboriginal Youth & Community Services (MAYCS) have united to host the *Quarterly Sector Youth Forum (QSF)* in Sydney on 19–20 May 2026. The two-day event will be one of the most significant gatherings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, families, sector leaders and government in recent years – and at its heart will be a simple but powerful commitment: when it comes to the systems that shape young people’s lives, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people must be central to the conversations and the decisions that affect them.

The data tells a story that demands urgent action. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children make up just seven per cent of the child population in NSW, yet account for 45 per cent of all children in out-of-home care (OOHC) – approximately 6,500 children as of June 2025. The 2024 NSW Auditor-General found the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) made "negligible progress" on structural reform and at the current pace, it will take 57 years to transfer case management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in OOHC to Aboriginal-led organisations. This QSF brings together the evidence, the sector and – most importantly – the young people whose lived experience must shape what comes next.

AbSec CEO, John Leha says, “for too long, the systems that most profoundly impact our children, young people and families have been designed, delivered and governed without us. We see the consequences of that every single day. We see it in the data. We see it in the courtrooms. We see it in the faces of young people who have been told their whole lives that others know what’s best for them.” Mr Leha continued “this Forum is our answer to that. It is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people standing up and saying: we have lived this, we understand it, and we need a seat at the table to shape our own futures. Self-determination is a right that in practice means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the authority to make decisions on the issues that affect us.”

The Forum will open with a lived experience panel – *When Protection Becomes Profit, Children Pay the Price* – followed by workshops on OOHC reform, Cultural Care Planning including Grief, Loss and Sorry Business, and aftercare, closing with a performance by Dhinawan Yarn.

The second day invites ACCOs and Mob Only, turning evidence into action with sessions on Know Your Rights for young people, DCJ updates on the OOHC Strategy and their organisational changes, a housing solutions co-design session, and a Yarning Circle on Intergenerational Advocacy.

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Youth Ambassador with MAYCS, Taite, explains why this QSF means so much, “there’s too many young people being spoken about instead of being spoken with – and I know that because I’ve lived it. I know what it feels like to have systems control your life but show no genuine care for you or your future. When lived experiences are shared with the right people, they can help create change.”

Daniel Daylight, CEO of Mouny Aboriginal Youth and Community Services highlights the importance of this partnership with AbSec to elevate the voices of Aboriginal young people, “this Youth-led forum matters because it’s not just another space where people talk about young people, it’s a space led by young people. What we’ve seen through Mouny Yarns and our work across communities is that young people already have the answers. They know what’s not working in out of home care and family support, because they have lived it.”

The Forum will also mark the official launch of AbSec's *Leaving Care Hub: Life After the System*, a free, practical online resource built with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people preparing to leave OOHC. The [Leaving Care Hub](#) walks young people through every stage of their transition: from starting a Leaving Care Plan at age 15, through to housing applications, Centrelink entitlements, accessing care records, and staying connected to family, culture and Country.

In 2023–24, of the more than 1,000 Aboriginal young people who exited care in NSW, around half transitioned to non-permanent arrangements, an estimated 200–300 experienced significant housing instability or homelessness. The Leaving Care Hub exists to change that — putting clear, culturally safe information directly in the hands of young people and the communities and workers who walk alongside them. The Hub will be launched at the Forum and is discoverable on the AbSec website: absec.org.au/leaving-care-hub-life-after-the-system.

Performing live at the Forum, Gomerioi artist Kobie Dee, from Maroubra on Bidjigal Land, brings an innate gift for storytelling and an electric connection with young people. One of the most exciting voices in Australian hip hop, Kobie Dee is a powerful reminder that culture, creativity and community are inseparable — and that the strength of Aboriginal young people finds expression in many forms.

The QSF is made possible with the support of *Cages Foundation*, *MacKillop Family Services*, NSW Government's *Office for Youth*, the *Pastel Foundation*, *Act for Kids*, *Legal Aid NSW* and *Youth Action*. Their support is a meaningful signal to young Mob that the sector is willing to show up in action, not just words.

More information and an agenda is available on the AbSec website:
<https://absec.org.au/event/quarterly-sector-youth-forum-may-2026/>

About AbSec

AbSec is the peak Aboriginal organisation in NSW dedicated to empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by advocating for the rights, safety, and wellbeing of our children, young people and families. We build strength and resilience by supporting

community-led solutions, shaping policy, and driving reforms that ensure every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and young person grows up strong in culture and identity.

About Mouny Aboriginal Youth and Community Services

Mouny Aboriginal Youth & Community Services is a youth-led, community-controlled organisation based in Mount Druitt. Founded by Aboriginal young people, for Aboriginal young people, MAYCS exists to challenge harmful systems, tell our truths and lead meaningful, intergenerational change. Our purpose is to shift power into the hands of Aboriginal young people and community – where it belongs.

We don't wait for change, we make it. Through programs like Mouny Yarns, we've built trust, created new narratives, and proven that real solutions come from lived experience, not bureaucracy. We are not just a service – we are a movement grounded in culture, driven by purpose and powered by the young people of Mount Druitt.

For media opportunities, please contact Kristjan Porm, Communications and Memberships Manager, at media@absec.org.au or on 0402 158 726.

AbSec acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands across NSW and pays respect to Elders past and present. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the lands, waters and communities we serve, and recognise their unbroken connection to Country, culture and kin.

AbSec acknowledges the Stolen Generations who never came home and the ongoing impact of government policy and practice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families – and the enduring strength of communities who have always cared for their own.

