AbSec
NSW Child, Family & Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation

MEDIA RELEASE

absec.org.au

23 November 2026 | *For Immediate Release*

Safe at home, strong in culture: Aboriginal sector unites in Sydney in response to the impact of family and domestic violence

AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation will bring sector leaders together on Gadigal Country for its November Quarterly Sector Forum, confronting a critical question: how do we keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families safe from domestic and family violence without placing responsibility on those surviving it?

Held on 25–26 November at Rydges Sydney Airport, the free forum will unite Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, carers, practitioners, government and partners to examine the intersection of family violence, child protection, housing and community-led solutions.

"The statistics don't lie. Aboriginal children continue to be removed from their families at alarming rates, while domestic and family violence is causing devastating harm across our communities," said AbSec CEO John Leha. "We know what needs to change. Governments must move beyond commitments and invest in Aboriginal-led prevention, strengthen community-controlled services and ensure families experiencing violence receive support rather than further punishment. Too often, people escaping violence are the ones made to carry the weight of it, and too often it's our children who are removed as a result."

The statistics driving the urgent need for change highlight the challenges facing Aboriginal children, families and communities:

- **6,312 Aboriginal children** in NSW were living in out-of-home care at 30 June 2024. Nationally, the rate reached 52 per 1,000 children in 2025, with Closing the Gap Target 12 going backwards. (AIHW; Productivity Commission)
- **One in ten Aboriginal women** in NSW reported physical harm or threats from a family member in 2018–19, the highest rate of any state. (AIHW)
- **First Nations people are hospitalised** for family violence at 28 times the rate of non-Indigenous Australians. First Nations women experience homicide at 5.6 times the rate of non-Indigenous women. (AIHW)
- **Emotional abuse**, including exposure to family violence, accounts for 51% of substantiated child protection cases involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. (AIHW)
- **No new national data** on family violence against First Nations women and children has been available since 2018–19, preventing progress against Closing the Gap Target 13 from being measured. (AIHW)

Speakers and program highlights

C301-C302, Level 3, 104 Eveleigh Street, Redfern NSW 2016
PO Box 3045, Redfern NSW 2016

(02) 9559 5299 | www.absec.org.au

The two-day program brings together Aboriginal-led services, researchers, peak bodies and government, including:

- **Jahmarley Dawson**, Wajji-Walu Dreaming – Smoking Ceremony and Welcome to Country
- **A/Prof BJ Newton & Neika Tong | UNSW**, UNSW – *Bring Them Home, Keep Them Home* research
- **Paul Gray**, Indigenous Child Protection Hub, UTS Jumbunna – progress on Safe and Supported
- **Natalie David**, DCJ – youth justice and domestic violence strategy
- **Kowana Welsh & Taritah Daugherty**, WAGEC – prevention and early intervention
- **Lily Judd**, Beam – practical applications of AI in frontline services.
- **Noeleen Timbery** | DCJ - Aboriginal Sector Investment Strategy
- **Penny Magann-Jones & Carlee Maccoll** | AbSec – Delegated Authority.

Day One examines NSW domestic, family and sexual violence reforms, child protection, housing and Aboriginal-led prevention programs, including WAGEC's All In and Merana Aboriginal Community Association's Lines of Respect. A panel discussion titled *Safe and Connected: Is reform translating into change for families experiencing DFV?* will ask whether recent reforms are making a real difference for Aboriginal families living with domestic and family violence.

Day Two focuses on national reform, delegated authority for ACCOs, sector priorities and practical technology solutions. Breakout yarns will explore workforce development, Culture in Practice and Aboriginal Family Preservation.

Driving reform and accountability

The forum will advance AbSec's policy priorities, calling for greater investment in Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, stronger Aboriginal decision-making authority, earlier intervention to keep children safely with their families, and coordinated responses across child protection, housing, justice and domestic and family violence services.

AbSec will also push for greater government accountability, equitable funding and commissioning arrangements, and reforms that recognise the importance of culture, family and community in keeping children safe. Discussions will help establish clear sector priorities to inform future advocacy and government action.

Registration | 25–26 November 2026 | Rydges Sydney Airport

Registration is free, with limited places available. Both days are open to carers, practitioners, government and partner organisations. Meals are provided, with discounted accommodation and parking available. Register on this link: absec.org.au/event/quarterly-sector-forum-november-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

C301-C302, Level 3, 104 Eveleigh Street, Redfern NSW 2016
PO Box 3045, Redfern NSW 2016

(02) 9559 5299

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

For more policy information, media enquiries, interviews and case studies, contact:
Kristjan Porm, Communications & Memberships Manager, AbSec | media@absec.org.au | 0402 158 726