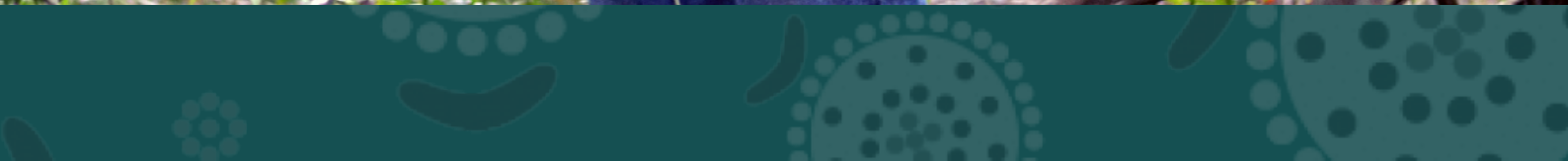


LINK-UP (NSW)

Aboriginal Corporation



Issue 1 | July 2021 - September 2021





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation acknowledge that our work is conducted on the traditional lands of the Aboriginal nations across New South Wales.

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

Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to Link-Up (NSW) and our communities.

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

WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that this document may contain images of deceased persons

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Lizzie May

Yaama,
I would like to acknowledge that we are all on Aboriginal Land that has never been ceded, I pay my respect to elder's past, present, and emerging. For those who have not made it home, or are still on their way, we hope that you make it home soon. We would like to pay our respect to the many stolen generations members who will never make it home and send our love to them and their families. I recognise the importance of knowing where we come from, our identity, kin, and culture.

As chair of Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation on behalf of the Board, Staff, members, and clients I am proud to present the first edition of our quarterly newsletter. I would like to acknowledge Link-Up (Qld) for the inspiration for creating our own newsletter.

We would like to acknowledge the challenging time our mob are facing during the COVID – 19 pandemic and offer our sincerest condolences to those who lost loved ones during this time and were not able to pay their respects and give our loved ones the send-off to the dreamtime they deserve.

Link-Up (NSW) has met the challenges of the pandemic and the strict lockdown restrictions the best we could, our office sits in the middle of the one of the hot spots, although we have been in lockdown or on restrictions for a large proportion of the year, we have had some great gains.

All our staff are currently working from home and our face-to-face reunions have been postponed until next year to ensure the safety of our clients and staff.

The deadly staff have been creative and come up with some great ideas to connect with our clients and community. We have been utilising our social media platforms to connect with mob and keep them informed and updated about COVID and the restrictions, as well as try to provide our mob with some tips on keeping themselves safe and to take care of their wellbeing.

Our amazing reunification team successfully held their first ever virtual reunion in September, we did not want to wait until after the lockdown and restrictions were lifted. Our wonderful counsellors have done a great job checking in with our clients and members to that make sure they are doing alright, and that their mental health does not decline in these hard times. Our awesome program team have been hosting some awesome online trivia and we are providing much needed hampers to our clients in need.

Our Family Link Program funding has been continued for an additional 2 years and our Redress program an additional year. We are grateful that we can continue to provide this very important work.

Unfortunately we had to postpone the 2021 COOEE Festival, however our COOEE website is about to be launched, once the lockdown and restrictions are over the deadly 2021 COOEE merchandise will be available to purchase via the website.

It is very disappointing that we have had to postpone our 40th Anniversary Gala Dinner yet again it was to be held in 2020.

We would like to thank our funders as always for their continued support during these tough times. Without this funding, we would be unable to continue assisting Aboriginal people and communities in NSW.

Lizzie May
Chairperson
Proud Wiradjuri woman
from Nanima NSW

COVID-19 IMPACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect across our country and on our mob. Link-Up (NSW) would like to acknowledge those who have sadly succumbed to this virus, and their loved ones who are mourning these tragedies. We have seen our community suffer mentally being distanced from their families in isolation, and watched very own black businesses suffer huge financial losses due to the extended lockdowns. Now, more than ever, is the time to support each other.

Link-Up (NSW) experienced our own set of challenges, being unable to reunite members of our Stolen Generations with their families and take them back to Country, which had an enormous impact on our organisation being that is at the core of everything we do. Thankfully, we have a team of dedicated, passionate and driven staff members who were flexible and innovative in our service delivery. Whilst not the same, our reunions have continued to be held virtually with the help of technology. We plan to take these clients back to Country when safe to do so. Our staff have engaged via social media to keep the community up to date with information as it becomes available, whilst also providing online trivia to keep connected.



Aboriginal people are one of the most vulnerable groups and we need to come together to ensure the safety of our Elders, and our children... Who are our future. We can only achieve this by following advice from health experts and protecting ourselves to slow the spread of this virus. The Link-Up (NSW) Board of Directors understand the importance of our community being vaccinated and encourage you mob to do so.

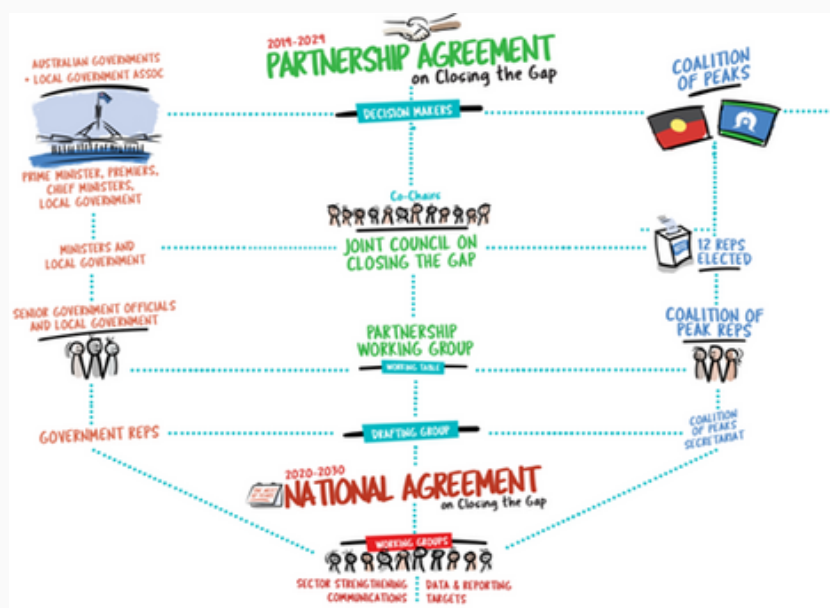
We are the oldest surviving culture in the world and COVID-19 will not stop us thriving. If anything, these tough times have shown us just how resilience our people are, which is something to be proud of.

We can't wait to Link back up with you mob again!

CAPO

CAPONSW (CAPO) formed in April 2011 through the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Founding members came together to strengthen their collective advocacy for improved social, economic and cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal people in NSW.

The NSWCAPO and the NSW Government have agreed joint governance arrangements to develop, implement and monitor NSW's response to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. These joint governance arrangements make up the NSW Partnership Agreement for Closing the Gap.



NSW CAPO Peak Bodies include:

1. First Peoples Disability Network Australia ('FPDN'),
2. Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation ('Link-Up (NSW)'),
3. NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation ('NSW AbSec')
4. NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group ('NSW AECG'),
5. NSW Aboriginal Land Council ('NSWALC'),
6. NSW/ACT Aboriginal Legal Services ('NSW/ACT ALS'), and
7. Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW (AH&MRC).
8. BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation (BLAQ)



Lynda-June Coe
Community Engagement
Officer (CAPO)

My name is Lynda-June Coe and I am the new Community Engagement Officer –Closing the Gap. I started in this role on the 9th of June. My mob come from Erambie 32 Acres, Wiradjuri country and the Badu Island people of the Torres Strait. I am currently living on Darug country in Western Sydney. I applied for this position because I saw an opportunity to become involved in such an important field such as healing and reunification for our mob and wanted to be a part of that.



Justin Hodges
Policy Officer (CAPO)

My name is Justin Hodges I am the new Closing the Gap (CAPO) Policy Officer. My mob is the Kooma Nation, from Bollon, Southwest Queensland and I was raised in Western Sydney on Darug Country. I applied for this role because I wanted to step away from Government and work more closely with community again. I also wanted to learn and be a part of how Link-Up (NSW) helps heal and reconnect the Stolen Generation with family and their communities.

Indigenous Literacy Day 2021 Book Donation

For Indigenous Literacy Day 2021 we wanted to do something special to raise awareness and make a difference, so for every like we received on our Indigenous Literacy Day social media post we donated one book to multiple Aboriginal preschools and children's organisations across NSW.

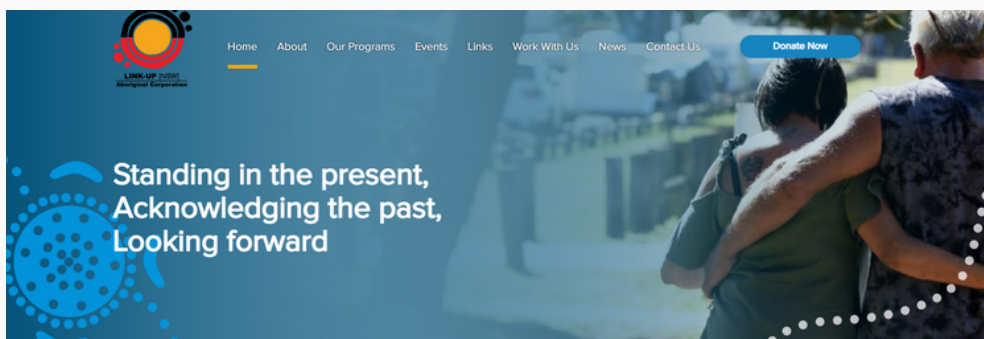
The first Preschool to receive their book donation was Yenu Allowah Aboriginal Child and Family Centre where they took an image of a young student reading the newly donated books!



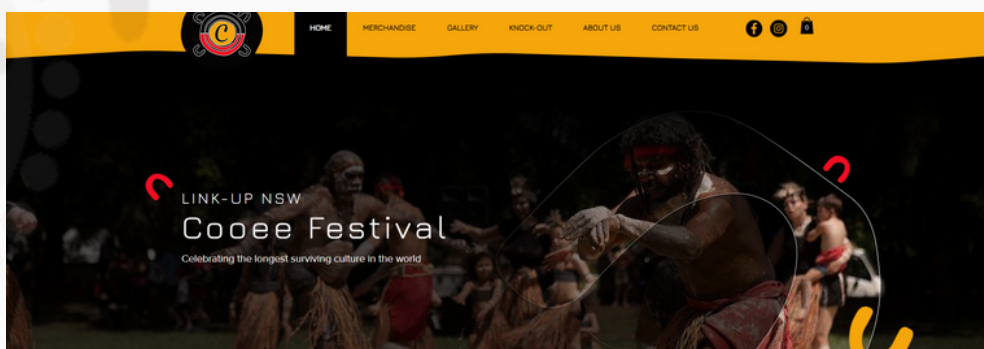
OUR NEW WEBSITES

We are excited to announce the recent launch of our new websites for Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation and The COOEE Festival. Our aim is to encourage potential clients to contact us by making information on our services easier to access and inspiring all Australians to celebrate the longest living culture on earth.

<https://www.linkupnsw.org.au/>



<https://www.cooeensw.org.au>



Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation Mobile Education Centre Launch

On Thursday 13th February 2020, it was not only the 12th anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations, Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC) launched their Mobile Education Centre. The Mobile Education Centre spreads awareness of the lives of Aboriginal people that were in Kinchela Boys Home and marks 50 years since its closure.

The event was opened with a Welcome to Country by the Metropolitan Aboriginal Lands Council followed by Dignitaries speeches, a cultural dance performance and Smoking Ceremony. A short animated film and a KBHAC Mobile Education Centre Q&A session.

KBHAC has transformed a retired commuter bus into a mobile education centre (MEC) for the purpose of truth telling and healing experience about Kinchela Boys Home and the Stolen Generations. In the front half of the MEC, there is an exhibition display that was curated in consultation with the uncles and in the back of the bus, a cinema which features a short animated film about Kinchela Boys Home.



Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation

For more information, take a look at the KBHAC website:

<https://kinchelaboyshome.org.au/what-we-do/education-program/>

or you can contact their office on (02) 9051 1690

or by email:
office@kinchelaboyshome.org.au.



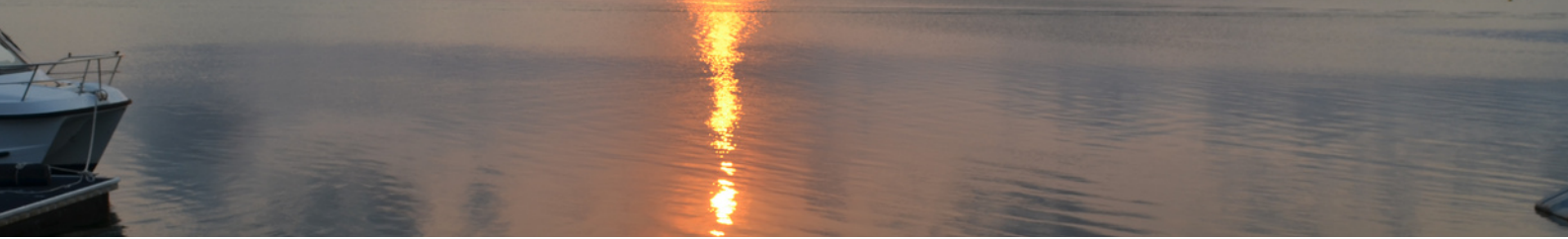
The aims of this Truth Telling and Healing Experience include:

1. Educating young people and communities about Kinchela Boys Home and more broadly the Stolen Generations
2. Reconnecting KBH survivors and their descendants to the communities they were taken from
3. Supporting local truth telling and healing in communities by recording stories of elders and other community members who lived through these experiences
4. Empowering visitors to feel they are contributors to intergenerational healing

This is a survivor led truth telling experience. The MEC provides

a safe space for students and community members to talk with survivors about their experiences in Kinchela Boys Home and gives a broader understanding of the ongoing impacts experienced by Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants and families. We invite and encourage all Stolen Generations survivors and their families to connect with us when the MEC is in your community.





Lewandowski Reunion - Kempsey, NSW

Written By Zina Stephan - Caseworker

The Lewandowski Reunion brought together family that had been separated since the 1920s after the removal of Vicki's grandmother Clorine to Cootamundra Girls Home at 13 years old, she then went on to have 3 children who each had 1 child of their own.

Due to Clorine passing away at an early age the cousins never had a chance to meet or know each other and for 49 years Vicki did not know her mother's side of the family, let alone her Aboriginality until starting the journey to search for her mother's family and even then, there was no record of Clorine's mother Ida Drew anywhere to be found.



It was not until Link-Up (NSW) searched every record of people with the surname "Aboriginal" on Birth, Deaths and Marriages (NSW) Family History Research website that Clorine's mother Ida Drew was found. This was the final piece of the puzzle, a death certificate that showed where she had lived, who her parents were, her marriage to a Morthem and all her children.

Finally, Link-Up (NSW) could pinpoint the area where the family was from but also that they were Dunghutti nation.

"Coming on this journey together healed parts of themselves that they never knew needed to be healed."





**Students at the South West Rocks Public School, believed to be in the 1910s.
Picture courtesy of the Macleay River Historical Society**

Further research found that the family had been the traditional owners of the land where Kinchela Boys home was placed and that the Drew family were the first children removed to Kinchela Boys Home in 1923 before it had even been established.

A call to the Dunghutti Elders council asking for any remaining Drew family members to contact Link-Up (NSW) seemed like a long shot until we heard from 3 different family members who confirmed all of the research. Once confirmed Link-Up (NSW) was able to take the family members who had been separated back to country to not just see where the ancestors and family call home but meet family members they never knew existed.

A family reunion was organised with all Drew family that were available and Link-Up (NSW) had the pleasure in organising a family lunch in Kempsey. In attendance we had the eldest and youngest of the Drew family with the youngest being only 1 day old.

At the family lunch Vicki's mother Dianne who has terminal cancer was very emotional and said she could not cry as she would not be able to stop herself.

Dianne wished she had met her family sooner but was very happy she still had this opportunity and was so thankful that everyone had turned up.

As she was only 7 when her mother Clorine passed, she did not know much of her family history.

Different members of the family brought their own research to the lunch, so the family sat and shared their history and family stories and created a family tree that was now complete.

At the end of the day all of the clients were gathered on the balcony discussing the events, eating food and and enjoying family time together like they had known each other their whole lives. Coming on this journey together healed parts of themselves that they never knew needed to be healed.

Each client made it clear how appreciative they were to have gone through the experience with the support of Link-Up (NSW) and that even though so much hurt had happened in the past this was the first step to healing for their future.



"The sisters were amazed at the resilience of their great grandmother but also saddened by her experiences all because she was an Aboriginal woman."

Coad Reunion - South Australia

The Coad Reunion in South Australia saw Link-Up (NSW) and Nunkuwarrin Yunti (Link-Up South Australia) come together to collaboratively take 2 sisters NAME & NAME back to Ngadjuri country. While the sisters had grown up with their grandmother, they did not know of their Aboriginal heritage as Pamela's maternal Great Grandmother was removed and taken to The Holy Cross Parish Orphanage in 1911.



Link-Up (NSW) Met Nunkuwarrin Yunti Staff in South Australia, who had organised for a Ngadjuri Tour Guide Quenten Aguis to take us to Ngadjuri country and areas of cultural significance.

In the town of Riverton, we stopped to see the sculpture of Aboriginal Woman and Child that represented the continuity of Ngadjuri people and culture, then continued onto Burra where we were taken to a natural healing spring that was used to heal ailments.

The tour guide took us to Redbanks where there was a billabong in the national park where we sat and were told stories of the Dreamtime, shown fossils and artifacts and even a skeleton of an extinct animal.



A lunch was provided by Link-Up at Mt Bryan for everyone before continuing on towards Peterborough where we went the scenic route to see old rock carvings dated before the 19th century. In Peterborough we visited the courthouse and even the local police were astounded to hear of an Aboriginal woman at 18 years old in the 1920's taking a white man to court for maintenance and the local historian society were very excited to help us pinpoint the exact location of the Casey farm where she had been sent to live.

In Blackrock sat the old house belonging to their Great grandfather and the sisters were amazed at the resilience of their great grandmother but also saddened at the life she had to lead all because she was an Aboriginal woman.

It was an amazing experience for 2 woman in their 70's to return to Country having lived their entire life not knowing of their culture, only to leave proud of who they are and their culture.



Healing Weekends

Link-Up NSW healing weekends create a safe space for all clients to engage with one another in many different cultural activities such as arts and crafts, storytelling and being open to tell one another's journey coming through Link-Up NSW. Within this time friendships are made that bring a family aspect, as we are a Link-Up family that have many different journeys and personalities but once we are together "WE ARE ONE".

Link-Up NSW were able to provide three healing weekend this year:

1. Kangaroo Valley
2. Noonaweena, Kulnura
3. Fairmont, Leura



Many memories, for both clients and staff, were crated over the weekends.

The different locations were selected so that the communities of those areas could attend a healing weekend that was close to home. Clients do not always need to attend a weekend within their area, as it is sometimes nice to meet community members from other areas due to the different stories and experiences.

At Noonaweena, we had a fire that started from sunrise to sunset every day. The beautiful thing about this is that in created a space for everyone to yarn and contribute to keeping the fire burning. Everyday many stories were told, and new lessons learned. Dinner time was the best part of the day, it allowed the Link-Up family to come together at the beautiful big, long table to talk about our days and what we have learned and enjoyed.



The COOEE Festival

The COOEE Festival is an all inclusive free event based in Western Sydney that celebrates Aboriginal culture, acknowledges the struggles of aboriginal people, recognises the fight that has been fought by our ancestors and the importance of identity, culture and reuniting mob with family, community, culture and identity.

The event aims to educate and unite all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on the topic of the significance of this date.

The event includes a music stage, kids world, cultural stage, Elders tent, health hub, markets, food truck , Headliner acts that put on a performance for the community.



94% of community members surveyed felt that COOEE was important for the Western Sydney Community!





COOEE FESTIVAL 2020

On the 26th January 2020, Link-Up (NSW) hosted the second COOEE Festival at Regatta Park, Emu Plains, celebrating the oldest surviving culture in the world.

COOEE is an all-inclusive event that celebrates our culture, acknowledges the struggles of our people, recognises the fight that has been fought by our ancestors before us and the importance of identity, culture and reuniting mob with there important factors.

The night was started with a Welcome to Country from XXXX, an acknowledgement of the Stolen Generations from Aunty Rita Wright and introduction from Mayor Ross Fowler.



There was a deadly line-up of entertainment, with Kevin Kropinyeri hosting the night and the amazing Archie Roach headlining.

Our other entertainment included, Emma Donovan and the Putbacks, Jarrod Hickling, Col Hardy, The Merindas and Montanah Grace.

There was some amazing cultural performances from dance groups Nulungu Dreaming and Djiriba Waagura.

The festival had a range of local organisations with informational stalls for community members to walk around and chat with local services they may not of known about otherwise.

Walkabout Barber came out for the second time for our elders to provide free haircuts and for the first time ever had a female to do the hair of our Aunts.



COOEE 2020 Artwork Competition Past. Present. Future. Survival.

For the first time, COOEE held an artwork competition, with the theme for the artwork to be Past. Present. Future. Survival.

The winner for the 2020 Competition is Aiesha Pettit-Young, a proud Wongaibon & Wiradjuri woman, her artwork shows the importance of teaching our culture to the next generations, maintaining our knowledge and keeping it alive.



Title of the Artwork: Culture

The meaning behind the Aiesha's Artwork: The painting represents the passing down of knowledge, culture and spiritual connection to the land and sun. The painting is set in a desert landscape and includes a boy holding a spear, a man dancing and an elder playing the didgeridoo. This represents the pattern of sharing culture, as the cycle is constant. The sun represents "Grand Father Sun" a spirit who has provided the resources needed for survival. The pattern in the ground represents the connections we share with the earth. Hands in the sky represent the ancestor's markings and knowledge they have placed on earth to help guide younger generations.

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COOEE FESTIVAL 2021

Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation organised the COOEE Festival for 3 July 2021 at Town Centre Reserve Mt Druitt, however after closely monitoring COVID-19 updates, recommendations and restrictions provided by NSW Health, we made the difficult decision to postpone COOEE Festival 2021 until further notice as it is our priority to ensure the safety of our community, particularly our Elders and children. We are currently exploring options to have this event rescheduled to another date, as we are committed to providing this important day to our people to celebrate culture.



COOEE 2021 Artwork Competition

MAINTAIN THE DREAMING

The winner for the 2021 Competition, Wiana Pemul
by Danielle Kenton



The story behind this artwork is that the Wiana Pemul (which in Darug means Mother Earth) is an ancestor spirit guiding the Earth and shaping the Earth to ensure The Dreaming continues, as The Dreaming is a connection we all have with the land and our ancestors. The artwork also represents my Grandmother and my connection to her and The Dreaming. She is the one that passed The Dreaming onto my mother and aunts and then it lives on through my sister and I. This Mother Earth is a protector and creator with The Dreaming in her belly and the culture, connections and knowledge radiating out from her. She is birth, life and death all in one being and with connect us with yesterday, today and tomorrow. She guards The Dreaming within her, whilst allowing The Dreaming to connect us all together. My Grandmother's spirit lives on through this painting and always reminds me of my personal connection to The Dreaming.

NEW COOEE MERCH COMING SOON

We are introducing new products that will be available to purchase at the COOEE Festival and online soon!





LINK-UP [NSW]
Aboriginal Corporation



About Link-Up (NSW)

Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation has been reuniting Stolen Generations Members with family, community, culture and identity since 1980. Today, our services expand beyond reuniting clients; seeing us conducting family history research and identifying culture for our kids in out of home care to embed a sense of identity and belonging. Building strength in our communities, as well as counselling and addressing trauma in our people. We offer mentors, self-empowerment and always strive to prove that the Aboriginal community can do more than “just survive”!

Contact Us



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(not free for mobile phones)



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