

LINK-UP (NSW) NEWSLETTER

April 2023 - June 2023



LINK-UP [NSW]
Aboriginal Corporation



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



WALKER FAMILY REUNION

Annabell Walker became a Link-Up (NSW) client as she was searching for her son Elliot Milton Flanders, who was forcibly taken from her when she was 15 years old from Burnt Bridge Mission in Kempsey. For over 12 months, we struggled to find any information or documentation about Elliott until we reached out to the community via social media for help. Amazingly, the post received many shares and reached Elliot's daughter in Newcastle, who informed us of his name change to Edward Flanders. We were saddened to hear of Elliot's passing and can confirm that he spent many years of his life searching for his family. However, Elliot left behind two daughters who were eager to meet their Nan, who was just as excited to hear of her Granddaughters and great Grandchildren.

Due to Annabell's age and health, our staff prioritised this reunion and started planning it immediately. On the 7th of March 2023, Link-Up (NSW) travelled to Lismore to reunite Annabell with her beautiful granddaughters. The daughters were instantly welcomed, as they fell and cried into their Nan's arms for the very first time. The girls wasted no time building a relationship with their family and shared stories about their father. They also brought along videos and photos of their father, giving their Nan the opportunity to see a snippet of her son's personality and hear his voice. Link-Up Staff also brought images of Elliot as a child for the whole family to view.

After the reunion, Elliot's 7 siblings became clients and wished to visit his grave site, so Link-Up (NSW) started planning a graveside reunion to be held Rookwood Cemetary, Licombe where Elliot was buried.



Although we can only fund for one reunion per client, Annabell and Elliot's daughters travelled down from Coffs Harbour, Newcastle, and Dubbo on their own to attend the graveside reunion.

On Wednesday 17th of May 2023, Link-Up (NSW) took the Walker siblings to their late brothers' grave site. The reunion begun at the plaque dedicated to Elliot with an Acknowledgement of Country and a short introduction speech from staff. The Walker family mourned their brother, dad, and son together. Afterwards, the staff made their way over to the grave site, for a Smoking Ceremony to cleanse their souls. Each family member placed a yellow rose wrapped in red, black, and yellow ribbon above Elliot's grave, as yellow was his favourite colour. Staff noticed two birds sitting in the tree right above them, singing out and watching. This spiritually significant moment was viewed as a sign that Elliot was there with them in spirit.

Link-Up (NSW) would like to thank everyone involved in this case; from the staff members to the community members who shared these posts.

This is why we do, what we do.

We wish the Walker family all the best in the future, maintaining their connection to each other and in honouring & remembering Elliot.









VIDAL FAMILY REUNION

Link-Up (NSW)'s client, William Vidal was forcibly removed and adopted out to a non-indigenous family when he was a young boy. He was raised to know nothing about his Aboriginal heritage, culture or family. After years of unanswered questions and being shut down from his adopted parents, he began searching for his biological family and came to Link-Up (NSW) in 2022 for help. William wanted to reunite with his family and know "who he is and where he is from".

He provided Link-Up (NSW) with his adoption papers and shortly after Link-Up (NSW)'s researchers received the file, they located his younger sister Fay Langlo. Sadly, she had passed away when she was only 3 years old due to various health complications. She was buried at Campbell Hill Cemetery, Telarah NSW.

A Link-Up (NSW) caseworker attended AEC (Australian Electoral Commission) to locate his other sister Mabel Langlo. Mabel was found to be alive and living in a retirement village in Queensland. Link-Up (NSW) reached out to the retirement village, but unfortunately were advised that Mabel was not ready to have contact with her brother. The caseworker and a Link-Up (NSW) counsellor contacted William to advise of this heartbreaking news.

On the 30th of May 2023, William, his wife and Link-Up (NSW) staff attended the grave site of his sister, Fay at Campbell Hill Cemetery. A Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony took place, and thereafter, William had the opportunity to see where his younger sister was buried.

After the emotional graveside reunion, William spoke about how he started to feel more connected, and the missing pieces were being filled, however he is very much still on a journey of healing.



HEALING WEEKEND

This healing weekend was quite special to me, as I have gained a newfound love and perspective of them. Previously, I was attending healing weekends as a member of Link-Up (NSW) to relax, heal and get to know others that come from the same situation as mine and my families, which I was super grateful for! This time round, I was on the other end as a staff member.

Although it was quite familiar to me, this time it was more about how can I attend to the elders needs or ensure they feel comfortable to enjoy their overall experience throughout the weekend. I was trying to go above and beyond so they could have a magical and memorable time away.

This has truly given me a deeper appreciation for all the staff at Link-Up and the amazing effort that goes on behind the scenes, to make the process seamless. From securing a beautiful venue, gathering fun prizes or games, to sorting out the most delicious- mouth watering menu- that was a crowd pleaser. To checking off all the finer details which pulled the entire planning together. All to ensure the most unforgettable getaway for our clients. Stress free.

As we arrived on site, we got to watch a welcome to country / smoking ceremony which was fantastic! Such a lovely way to settle into the property.

From start to finish- it was such a memorable experience. Getting to know everyone on a deeper level, listen to stories over meals, or creative arts and exploring botanical gardens or whale watching at Kiama Blow Hole, just to name a few. I thoroughly enjoyed the energy and passion everyone brought to the games as they got out of their comfort zone's and attempted some of Link-Up's famous games such as catch the cookie, suck the m&m's, Auntie Janet's Bingo, and Uncle John's Trivia and many more.





Overall, it was a real eye opener as to, just how important these healing weekends are for our clients! Its one thing to experience it firsthand, another to be part of making that experience gold class for our clients. I am a firm believer that, these weekends away are so successful in the healing process and re-connecting or keeping connections with mob that is undeniably the most satisfying thing you could ever be apart of!!

Staff member, Antonietta



THE COOEE FESTIVAL 2023



On the 15th of April 2023, Link-Up (NSW) held our Cooee Festival 2023 at Mount DrUITT Town Centre Reserve. After postponing the event multiple times due to COVID-19 and wet weather conditions, we are beyond proud to share that Cooee 2023 was a huge success!

The day begun with a Welcome to Country by Erin Wilkins and beautiful smoking ceremony by Uncle Wes, throughout the day we had deadly live music by Uncle Roger Knox, Jarrod Hickling, Christine Anu, Mitch Tambo and Dan Sultan, as our Headliner. The event also included deadly traditional dancers the Galumaay Dancers & Nulungu Dreaming.

We would like to thank the attendees, staff, volunteers, sponsors, organisations, stallholders, photographer, videographer, traffic controllers, line-up, MC, foodtrucks, festival hire and everyone else involved. Without your support, we could not deliver this significant event to our Western Sydney Aboriginal community. Bring on Cooee 2024!









SORRY DAY 2023 ELDERS LUNCHEON



On the 26th of May 2023, Link-Up (NSW) held an Elders Luncheon at the Babaayn Aboriginal Corporation office. The elders received a gift box on arrival full of Link-Up Merch and goodies, then enjoyed a beautiful lunch from Calico caterers while listening to the amazing Jarrod Hickling perform old country classics.

Although "Sorry Day" is a mournful day as it highlights the healing of our Stolen Generations, we were beyond grateful to have held this event full of smiles, laughs and dancing.







STAFF RETREAT

In June, Link-Up (NSW) staff attended our annual Staff Retreat at the beautiful location, Kaylina Estate in Bargo.

The Staff Retreat started 4 years ago with the idea of bringing the staff together by participating in team building and cultural activities. It is an opportunity for staff members to yarn and connect with those they don't normally work along side of. Building a more positive and trusting team environment leads to a higher productivity level, which in turn will benefit our clients.

Working in the industry we do and assisting our Stolen Generations with their trauma while they are on their journey back home means there is a higher burnout rate for employees than other in other industries. Link-Up (NSW) invests in our staff by giving them a chance to enjoy these few days away from the office and immerse themselves in the activities without the stresses of their normal work days.

The staff retreat receives a lot of positive feedback from our employees; they are always looking forward to the next one!!







RECONCILIATION WEEK 2023

Coast Shelter Reconciliation Gathering

Coast Shelter staff joined with clients, community members and representatives of other organisations including Link-Up NSW in a walk from their Mann St office to Leagues Club Park on the Gosford waterfront on June 1, in recognition of National Reconciliation Week (May 27-June 7). The dates of Reconciliation Week are significant, with May 27 commemorating the referendum which allowed the Australian Government power to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Census, and June 7 marking the Mabo decision, which led to the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of lands (Reconciliation Australia).





MT DRUITT RECONCILIATION WALK



**LINK-UP (NSW) WERE INVITED
TO ATTEND AND HOLD A STALL AT
THE PARRA VS
RABBITOHNS
INDIGENOUS
ROUND GAME
ALONG WITH OTHER
ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS**



HIGHLIGHTS

ZEST AWARDS

Link-Up (NSW) is incredibly honoured to have won the Outstanding First Nations Community award!!!

We were up against so many other deadly Aboriginal organisations in Western Sydney and want to congratulate them for their nominations.

We are proud that our work within the community is being recognised. This is dedicated to our precious Stolen Generations.. We will continue to work hard to bring you all home

This is why we do, what we do



ISO AUDIT

We are proud to confirm we have passed our quality audit with NO minor or major non-conformances, and have been re-certified for another 3 years!

Certification of our quality management system to the ISO 9001:2015 standard helps ensure we demonstrate a continued focus on the clients, a commitment to provide quality services and a cycle of continuous improvement within the organisation.

We would like to acknowledge the hard work our Office Coordinator, Adelle has put into ensuring we stay certified, as well as every single staff member who contributes to the overall quality and success of Link-Up (NSW).



Quality
ISO 9001



STAFF PROFILE

Samantha Foster

Hi, I'm Samantha Foster my mum's side is from Bigambul country on the southwest Queensland, Goodiwindi . Still on a journey to find where my Fathers Mob and where they are from.

I was born in Liverpool Hospital but lived up in QLD till I was the age 12 years old then moved down to western Sydney to be raised by my grandmother . Been in Mount Drutt since. I am one of 8 siblings. I have 5 beautiful children and an amazing partner of 17 years.

With my own life experiences and my own upbringing, I chose to incorporate my values on a daily with an open mind and a positive mindset.

I have a passion for working within the community and people , always wanting to assist on sharing a helping hand to anyone and everyone in any situation to make a difference to our Mob and Our Community.

My superpower is Resilience, which I use daily in work and home life. Random fact: for the people who know me, would agree I can talk under water.

Was told this Reminder from a wise person : It's a Marathon not a sprint
- Jamie Sampson CEO link-Up NSW Aboriginal Corporation





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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