



# LINK-UP (NSW) NEWSLETTER

Issue 07 | January 2024 - March 2024





# 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





# GREG SUNDERLAND REUNION

In October 2023, Link-Up (NSW) supported client, Greg Sunderland, to be reunited with his birth family in Coonabarabran, New South Wales.

Greg contacted Link-Up (NSW) searching for answers. The only information he had was being adopted out of what he thought was a Sydney based hospital as a newborn. Greg wanted more. He wanted to find the missing piece of the puzzle and was hoping the Reunification program had the answer.

Link-Up (NSW) researchers & caseworkers started working on Greg's file. After establishing Aboriginality, they then focused on trying to locate Greg's family and hospital records, as they needed to establish forced removal in order to assist Greg further.



Amazingly, Greg's Mother was located. She confirmed she was forced to sign adoption papers at Coonabarabran Hospital when Greg was only 4 days old. She was made to hand her baby over to strangers with the fear she may never see him again.

She told Link-Up (NSW) she had been waiting for the day her son came home.

Link-Up (NSW) staff and Greg traveled to Dubbo where Greg met his birth Mother and biological sisters for the very first time. Staff were able to witness the family's first hug, along with many tears and smiles. The staff gushed over how special it was to be part of this moment.

The next day, clients and staff travelled to Coonabarabran where they met with local knowledge holders, brother Clinton Lamb and Uncle Casey Dowd at Burra Bee Dee Mission where Greg's biological brother was buried.

Uncle Casey performed a Welcome to Country in Kamilaroi language and brother Clinton held a Smoking Ceremony, with a didgeridoo playing in the background. Throughout the day, Uncle Casey shared Dreamtime stories, yarns about Burra Bee Dee, Coonabarabran, and its history.

They then went to the park where the Castlereagh River flows so the family could take part of cultural activities such as ochre facial painting, learning the Kamilaroi language, finding their totems and watch traditional dancing.

The Suerland family are forever grateful for Link-Up (NSW) for bringing them home together and have already planned to see each other again in 2024.















# **LINK-UP (NSW) ABORIGINAL CORPORATION'S NATIONAL APOLOGY EVENT**



On 13 February 2008, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered the historical speech on behalf of the Federal Government, apologising to the Stolen Generations for the profound grief, suffering and loss inflicted upon them due to past Government policies. This was a momentous milestone for our people, being the first time the Government formally acknowledged the mistreatment the First Nations people of Australia were forced to endure.

Given our core business of reuniting the Stolen Generations back to their families, and the significance of this date, our Board of Directors and staff believe its important to commemorate it yearly. This year, Link-Up (NSW) held a National Apology Day event at Mt Druitt PCYC for the local community to come together and watch the replay of this landmark moment in our history.

Uncle Wes, a local Elder who is 102 years of age held a Smoking Ceremony and acknowledged the Darug land & Elders. Mt Druitt Police were honoured Uncle Wes also performed a smoking on the new Traffic and Highway Patrol Command cars for Western Sydney.

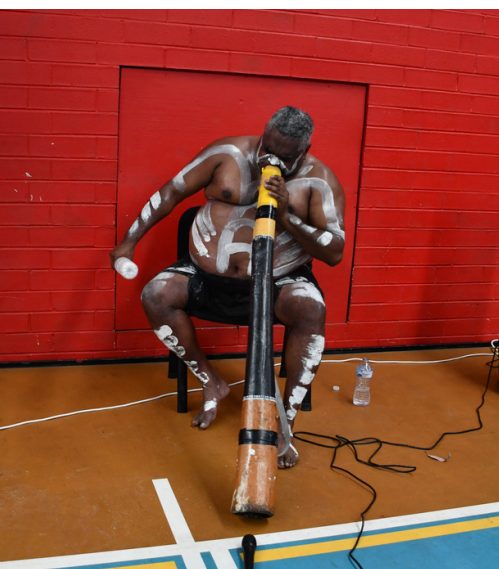
Link-Up (NSW) CEO, Jamie Sampson and Link-Up (NSW) Board Member, Uncle Wayne Fazldeen then welcomed the community to the event and spoke of the importance in acknowledging this occasion, followed by Yangkay Cultural Connect performing an amazing cultural dance. The community then enjoyed a BBQ lunch while they yarned and connected with the different services in the area.

We would like to thank Woolworths Plumpton for donating the supplies for the BBQ and the Healing Foundation who travelled from QLD & Canberra to attend this event and provide free shirts.











# GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY ORGANISATION WORKSHOP

In January 2024, Link-Up (NSW) staff members Krystle (CAPO Policy Officer) and Samantha (CAPO Community Engagement Officer) attended the Priority Reform (PR3) Government Accountability Organisation workshop run through in Redfern before heading into phase two of consultations around New South Wales.

The presentation was based on feedback during phase one consultations which were held in different locations across New South Wales. The NSW CAPO project team prepared draft options for an Accountability Organisation, which outline subjects such as functions, features, tools and structure.

An online materials document was also provided for the workshop, so during phase two consultations, community are easily able to provide feedback.

## POLICE ABORIGINAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE PACC MEETING

### *Aboriginal Action Plans*

A major role of the PACC is to contribute and assist in developing and implementing the LAC's Aboriginal Action Plan, this plan will assist, guide police/Aboriginal interventions and focus on 'local solutions for local issues'. The Action Plans provide Aboriginal people a voice in how their community is policed.

Once the Aboriginal Action Plan is finalised it will be signed jointly by the Local Area Commander and a member of the PACC nominated by the community members present.

The Action Plan should be a combination of both policing priorities and those key issues identified by the Aboriginal community, e.g. prevention of elder abuse, truancy, unsupervised children roaming.

The Aboriginal Engagement Officer at each Police Area Command or Police District will ensure that the Aboriginal Action Plan priorities are addressed regularly with the Aboriginal community.

On Tuesday, 14 February, NSW CAPO Policy Officer Krystle attended the Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee meeting on behalf of Link-Up (NSW) at Kimberwalli. The meeting was facilitated by Inspector Nelson, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer Emily and police officer Brock to discuss issues with policing, crime prevention tactics, and opportunities for police community engagement initiatives.

Inspector Nelson reiterated his teams commitment to working with community and attending as many community events as possible, depending on their availability. The unit will continue visiting schools for programs such as The Good Start Program, and be present at important events such as the COOEE Festival on 25 May 2024.

The approaching update of the Aboriginal Strategic Planning document was also discussed, with community recommending more positive engagement with youth, cultural awareness and sensitivity training to be regularly provided for all station staff, and more transparency around the complaints process for policy misconduct.



# YOUNG MEN'S GROUP GRADUATION

2023 saw the formation of the Young Men's Group program run by Link-Up (NSW) and Marist180's Daramu. The group was held fortnightly at the Daramu office in Hebersham. It focused on young Aboriginal men being able to receive support in a safe place, reconnect back to their culture and learn traditional practices.

Link-Up (NSW) staff member, Uncle Dennis, provided cultural knowledge and history with the group while Daramu staff member, Arthur assisted with educational classes. Together they gave the young men a safe space to yarn and feel heard.

In February 2024, a graduation was held for participants and their families to come together and celebrate completion of the program.

At the graduation, the young men were provided with a certificate of attendance and a thank you pack, which included a shirt, shorts, hat, bag and Indigenous designed football. The designs on the packs were a blend of the young men's art, giving them ownership over their work.

The Young Men's Group was a huge success given the amount of positive feedback received. We look forward to this year's program, building culture, respect and pride in a new group of young Aboriginal men.







## TERRITORIES REDRESS SCHEME A.C.T VISIT

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Manager, Jessica and Territories Redress Caseworker, Antonietta did a road trip to Canberra in February of 2024. The purpose of this trip was to yarn with the local organisations in the ACT about the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme and how Link-Up (NSW) supports the program. Jessica and Antonietta connected with many organisations and left leave information packs to be distributed throughout their community.

They even got the chance to visit the head office of National Indigenous Australians Agency, who also funds out biggest program Reunification!

## CAPO TARGET 9 MEETING

Link-Up (NSW) was invited to attend the CAPO Target 9 Office Level Working Group meeting at the Office of Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure in Newcastle, in March 2024.

CAPO Community Engagement Officer, Samantha attended the meeting in person, who was impressed with the outcomes of the discussion and action plan moving forward.

The team will continue meeting monthly to work towards the outcome of securing appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with the priorities and needs of Aboriginal people.





# NATIONAL REDRESS UPDATE

Link-Up (NSW) is a National Redress Scheme (NRS) support service that offers assistance and counselling to Aboriginal people who are survivors of sexual abuse while being institutionalised.

Redress Counsellor, Donna has travelled to regional areas across New South Wales, alongside Territories Redress Counsellor, Antonietta, to continue supporting our clients through the application process and ensure they receive their desired outcome.

Donna attends the redress workshops regularly which are held in different locations across the state. These workshops share updated information on the scheme and gives Donna the ability to meet other service providers to troubleshoot.

Link-Up (NSW) are currently assisting over 62 clients throughout the Redress application process. The first quarter of 2024 seen 3 clients accept payout offers from the NRS and 4 clients have received advanced payments.

We look forward to assisting more clients receive compensation.





# COOEE FESTIVAL 2024

The COOEE Festival is coming back in 2024! We invite you to join us at Peter Van Hasselt Reserve, Shalvey (also known as "Shalvey Fields") on Saturday, 25 May 2024.

The date of the festival has been changed to be held within Reconciliation Week. We chose this particular date as an acknowledgement to our annual National Sorry Day; 26 May. A significant date in the calendar for Aboriginal people.

The COOEE Festival promotes and celebrates the oldest surviving culture in the world! The festival is free and allows the community to share, learn, and represent culture through traditional corroborees, practices, and ceremony. The festival features retail stalls, food trucks, cultural workshops, kids' world, an Elders' hub, live music and more!

We are excited to showcase an incredible lineup of entertainment on the big stage this year, with our headliner being none other than the well-renowned, award-winning artist JESSICA MAUBOY!





# STAFF PROFILE

## MIKE COLEMAN

My name is Mike Coleman, and I am a staunch ally of First Nations people of the oldest living culture in the world.

I am a Reunification Researcher who has been at Link-Up (NSW) since October 2023.

I have lived in the Mt Druitt area for 15 years. I love the reliance of the people and the inclusiveness of the community regardless of who you are.

I have an amazing wife and 3 beautiful daughters whom I am very proud of.

I joined Link-Up (NSW) in hopes of contributing to bringing the Uncles and Aunties home. This island home of ours has so many stories to teach us and to learn about Country.

My strengths are my integrity, consistency, commitment to community, my passion and dedication to the causes of the organisation.

I love learning new things, listening to music, watching sport and spending quality time with family.

Link-Up (NSW) recently had a trivia competition where participants had to identify the artist and song for the music being played. It was a fantastic display of love amongst the staff where everyone joined in to sing some country music.

Well done Jamie Sampson for creating a positive office culture that feels more like a family.







**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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## Social Media

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