



LINK-UP [NSW]
Aboriginal Corporation



LINK-UP (NSW) NEWSLETTER

Issue 09 | July 2024 - September 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



RAYMOND HODGE REUNION

In 2022, Raymond Hodge made the brave decision to contact Link-Up (NSW) regarding his desire to find his connection to family and country.

The Researcher had discovered that Raymond's 3rd Great-Grandmother, Mary Jane Cain, was a well-known Aboriginal woman who was a strong activist for Aboriginal people in the Coonabarabran area. When the Researcher informed Raymond of who his 3rd Great-Grandmother was and the work she did for the community, his heart was filled with pride.

On the 1st of July, Link-Up (NSW) reunification staff travelled to Coonabarabran to meet with Raymond and his son Thomas. The following day, staff and clients arrived at a Burra Bee-Dee Mission where they met with local knowledge holders, Elder Uncle Casey Dowd and Brother Clinton Lamb where Raymond's family members are buried.

Uncle Casey welcomed everyone to country in Gamilaraay language and Brother Clinton performed a Smoking Ceremony. Throughout the morning, Clinton shared Dreamtime stories, cultural knowledge, language and traditional dancing was taught and performed by Raymond, Thomas and Clinton.

Raymond and Thomas felt overwhelmed and proud to dance for the first time on country with their brother, Clinton.

The Hodge family are forever grateful for Link-Up (NSW) staff for bringing them home to touch country where their ancestors once walked. Thank you Raymond and Thomas for allowing Link-Up (NSW) to be a part of your journey.





STAFF RETREAT

Link-Up (NSW) holds a Staff Retreat each year which is based on reconnecting to each other by participating in cultural & team building activities. This year we returned to Kalinya Estate in Bargo.

We were Welcomed to Bargo by local Dharawal elder, Aunty Glenda Chalker who shared her own personal experiences and that of her ancestors who walked Dharawal country before her. Following the Welcome to Country, we were treated with a Bush Tucker & Bush Medicine Workshop hosted by Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience.

This year saw the introduction of Traditional Indigenous Games (TIG) as part of the cultural & team building activities. We saw this as an opportunity for staff to learn and experience aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in a way that was suitable for all ages, abilities & backgrounds.

The feedback after these retreats is always positive, and the staff come back to the office ready to continue assisting our clients & feeling more connected to each other and to our culture.







NAIDOC WEEK 2024

Link-Up (NSW) honoured the resilience, strength and pride of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people and communities as we celebrated this year's NAIDOC theme "Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud".

We took pride in attending and participating in as many NAIDOC events as we could through the duration of NAIDOC week to connect and re-connect with mob across Western Sydney.

Every year, we look forward to celebrating NAIDOC week and we cannot wait to spend time out in the community again for NAIDOC 2025!



PCYC NATIONS OF ORIGIN (DAY ONE)



PCYC NATIONS OF ORIGIN (DAY TWO)



JAMISON PARK



GROSE VIEW PUBLIC SCHOOL

NAIDOC WEEK 2024



KINGSWOOD PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL



CHIFLEY COLLEGE DUNHEVED



CDC NSW DEPOT SEVEN HILLS



BAABAYN ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL



IKEA MARSDEN PARK



HEALING WEEKEND KANGAROO VALLEY 2024

As part of Link-Up (NSW)'s ongoing commitment to helping our clients heal, we invite them to our Healing Weekends where they have the opportunity to yarn with counsellors & staff, other Stolen Generation survivors, visit sacred sites & landmarks, and participate in cultural activities such as traditional art, dance, crafts & song.

In September 2024, we took our Healing Weekend to Kangaroo Valley. Over the duration of the weekend, staff & clients were treated to a Welcome to Country by Uncle Sonny Simms, and a Smoking Ceremony with traditional dances & dreamtime stories by Uncle Matt Simms and his traditional dance performers from Djiriba Waagura. We also took our clients to the nearby Fitzroy Falls, an 80m waterfall located in Morton National Park, which has wheelchair accessible paths to the viewing platform.

Clients were also given the opportunity to spend some down time at the accommodation where they could enjoy the richness of nature & the beautiful surroundings of Kangaroo Valley. They were able to participate in bingo, art, beading, other forms of crafts & utilise that time to get to know other clients & staff in attendance.

The feedback after Healing Weekends are always positive, and we cannot wait to attend the next one.





LEGAL AID NSW

FAMILY LAW AND CARE & PROTECTION CONFERENCE

Link-Up (NSW)'s Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Manager, Jessica Milanovic and Youth and Community (YaC) Manager, Tania Skerry were invited to the Legal Aid NSW Family Law and Care & Protection Conference at the ICC Sydney to present to lawyers and legal practitioners on the work that Link-Up (NSW) provides for the Aboriginal community.

Tania discussed the process of the Family Link referrals and the importance of the work that is done in the team for children in OOHC. The audience asked questions regarding the evidence around Researchers finding Aboriginality and what does it mean when a file is inconclusive.

Jessica discussed the Reunification program and its criteria. She shared in depth details about the Reunions, SEWB support and our Healing Weekends.

The Legal Aid team were impressed by Link-Up (NSW) & the services we provide to the Aboriginal community and expressed their willingness to let mob know of our organisation.



LAUNCH OF GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM



On September 26, 2024, Link-Up (NSW) staff members Samantha and Krystle attended the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO) Launch Report on Independent, Aboriginal-Led Accountability Mechanism. The launch was held at The NSW Parliament House on Macquarie Street, Sydney and led by Iona Roy who is the Manager of Government Accountability & Land Ownership that falls under "Priority Reform 3: Transforming Government Organisations".

The proposed mechanism was developed through an 18-month Aboriginal-led design process. It includes two core functions: enhancing existing accountability processes and leading Aboriginal-owned initiatives.

The purpose of the mechanism is to hold NSW Government accountable to achieving transformative change to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people.

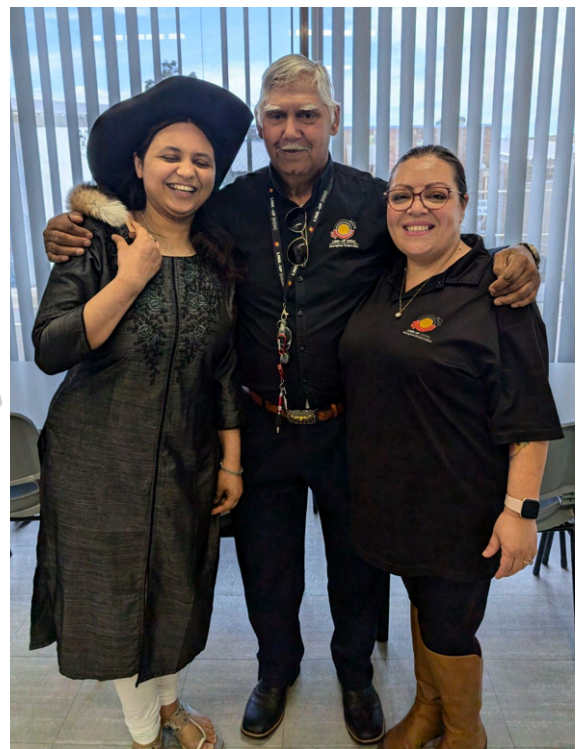


TEI WORKSHOP

INT HEALTH COLLEGE, ST MARYS

Attending this college to do a presentation talk of Aboriginal culture was a great experience especially to a group where there were none the students identified as Aboriginal. The students present were from other ethnic backgrounds that came to Australia to learn and work in the health field in many areas. The student wanted to know about the First Nations people across all states and territories after we had informed them that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in many communities where we have our own boundaries, traditions & protocols and speak in many different languages. I also informed the students that language can also be spoken through the use of art which portrays our stories of creation and the traditions we are bound by. There was so much knowledge shared with them like First Nations people are one with nature, we don't own the land, the land owns us and is known as our Mother. I explained the importance of using proper protocols when engaging and speaking with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially within the health industry across the country. The students were about to ask questions at the end which helped further their knowledge and enabled the students to understand how to approach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people & communities.

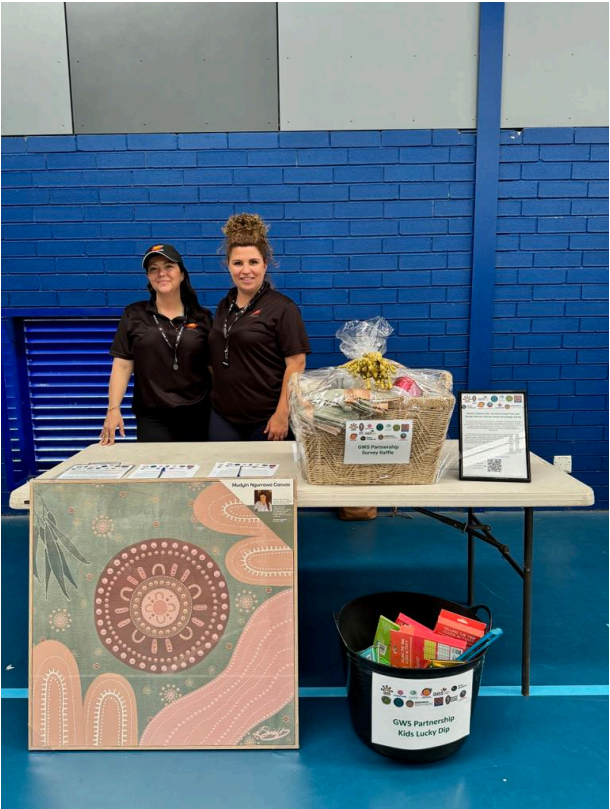
-- TEI Caseworker, Uncle Dennis Dunn



GWS PARTNERSHIPS

COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY

With commitment to the needs of the community leading the drive for the GWS Partnership team, GWS Partnerships Project Coordinator, Krystle, formulated a 'Community Needs Survey' and distributed it out across the Western Sydney community. The data collected from the survey will be used to inform the partnership about what the community feels is the most urgent or important areas for the Greater Western Sydney Partnership to focus on. GWS Partnership will use the information collected to ensure that Aboriginal inclusion will begin at the planning and development stages and that our voices continue to be heard throughout all aspects of activities.



STAFF PROFILE

KIAYA LEONARD

My name is Kiaya Leonard. A proud Wiradjuri warrior born and bred in Gilgandra, NSW with connections to Kamilaroi. Being a small-town girl, finding herself in the big city over the past 5 and a half years you can imagine it has had its challenges, though I trust that I have become stronger in my journey, overcoming the tough times. Just like the rest of us, I have overcome the struggles of broken families, addiction and poor choices, but my elders have always been the driving point for me, to push me to be the best version of myself and to always work hard.

I have worked within the Community Services sector for over 12 years and expanded on my experiences, skills, and knowledge throughout this time. I'm grateful to have worked alongside some passionate, loyal, strong, and knowledgeable people and being led in areas like early intervention, family preservation, out of home care (OOHC), justice, and youth work. Often working one on one with families and their children, though I have facilitated educational tools in cases where my understanding of how we learn was an advantage to ensure that our mob were confident and comfortable in their home and learning experiences and building that ongoing confidence to help maintain their positive achievements made within themselves and for their families.

I am truly passionate about supporting and advocating for our mob because for far too long we have been silenced and just like this year's NAIDOC theme, it's our time to be Blak, Loud and Proud. I'm proud to be an Aboriginal woman, having the resilience and determination that we as a people have strengthened throughout our generations since our ancestors started fighting for our rights.



I have been in the CAPO space for the past 3 months and am absolutely loving it, being able to affect the positive changes that I have often witnessed when working with our mob in many communities from the Central Coast, back home on country and now almost in every corner of Sydney, including as far south as Wollongong. I am now privileged to be able to work and live on Darug country today and I look forward to creating and strengthening connections with the leaders who are pathing the way for our mob in this beautiful area.

I am a strong believer that you are the creator of your own destiny!



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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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