



## 2021 QUEENSLAND CHILD PROTECTION WEEK AWARD WINNERS

**Professional (Non-Government) Award** - Outstanding contribution to promoting child protection issues in their capacity as a Professional working in the child protection (or related) field.

Mel James

Social Care Solutions was born out of Mel's passion to see improved outcomes for children in foster care by providing high quality assessments of kinship and general foster carers. That was 11 years ago! Now, Mel proudly supports a team of over 60 practitioners around the country, delivering assessments, training, program design, development and consultancy projects. Mel has a strong cultural lens particularly when it comes to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, ensuring they receive the most culturally appropriate assessment and training that Social Care solutions has on offer. Mel expects the same cultural understanding and advocacy from her staff.

**Professional (Government) Award** - Outstanding contribution to child protection at a practice, policy or service development level within the public service

Debbie Jones – Manager, Policy and Programs Unit, Policy and Programs Unit, Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group – Queensland Police Service.

The Policy and Programs Unit (PPU), Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group (CASC), Queensland Police Service (QPS) has been a key advocate for the QPS within the whole of government child protection framework for many years. The PPU collaborated across agencies to address excessive unnecessary police callouts to residential care facilities for predominantly non-police responses. The overall outcome of the multi-agency response has seen a reduction of approximately 4000 calls for service relating to children absent from residential care facilities in 12 months (30%). This is a significant reduction resulting in positive outcomes for young people and the differing agencies involved. Less contact with QPS in a negative context improves outcomes for young people and reduces the risk of escalating behaviour which can push the young person into the youth justice system.

**Media & Communications Award** - Development of an innovative approach, research or resource to promote child protection.

Rob Ryan – Executive Lead, Child, Youth and Family Engagement, Life Without Barriers

The Life Without Barriers' We Put Children First campaign promotes the shared responsibility for child safety and aims to prevent child sexual abuse. The strategy is based on a situational prevention approach, the basis of which is that organisations can reduce the risk of abuse occurring by making environmental changes. The campaign builds a culture among staff, carers, and the community where children are valued and respected, and the safety of children is paramount. Debbie Jones – Manager, Policy and Programs Unit Life Without Barriers shares campaign resources with other agencies, believing that education, tools and resources should be freely accessible in order for children to be protected and safe. This has allowed the campaign to have extensive reach and

impact. Life Without Barriers is a large provider and very generous – they have the reach, ability and a willingness to support and share resources with other agencies in the sector. Life Without Barriers have a strong commitment to child protection.

**Volunteer Award** – Invaluable contributions to child protection made by volunteers working in government or non-government agencies.

Aunty Coral Dessaix, Debbie Miscamble, and Uncle Peter Eather

The Walking Together for Logan’s Children collaboration was set up because of the increasing numbers of local children coming into the child protection system due to risks to their safety and wellbeing. It’s a First Nations-led approach, drawing inspiration from the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the long tradition of collaboration and community movement by local people living on the lands of the Yugambah and Jaggera speaking peoples. Our award winners are part of a recognised First Nations Leadership Group called Warril Yari-Go Karulbo. Warril Yari-Go Karulbo means working together, all together, from both sides of the river. Volunteers, Aunty Coral, Debbie and Uncle Pete have demonstrated courageous leadership to enrol community and partners in very complex and sensitive conversations about why our children are at risk. They have created safe and respectful Circles where Cultural Leaders from many nations are laying the foundations for understanding and respect to help our community rebuild for protection, intergenerational healing and hope.

**Regional Program Award** – Program that operates within part of, or across, a region to address some aspect of child protection.

Jae and Luka from CADA - Centre Against Domestic Abuse

The Safe Connections – Early Years Linkages Project aimed to improve outcomes for families in the Moreton Region experiencing domestic and family violence and associated child protection issues. The project was funded by Mercy Creative Communities fund and run by Centre Against Domestic Abuse. It focused on early intervention, collaboration and best practice responses. Importantly this project worked across the neo-natal and early childhood spaces with a view to improve the wellbeing of children prior to commencing school. This meant working with a range of professionals like school-based playgroup facilitators, school staff, speech pathologists, Indigenous education workers, outside school hours care workers, midwives, child health nurses and social workers. This group were able to enhance their confidence and competence to recognise and respond to risk and harm in a trauma informed way when working with families. The ‘midwife visit’ component of this project had 100% attendance, with only 1 woman not attending – and that was because she was giving birth!

**Transition 2 Success Initiative Award** – Outstanding contribution made by local community groups or businesses involved with the T2S program to get the best outcomes for young people 15 and over who are involved in the youth justice system or are assessed as being at risk of entering it.

The Bunya Peoples Aboriginal Corporation AKA Burnett Mary Regional Group

The Bunya Peoples Aboriginal Corporation partnered with the Transition 2 Success initiative to offer participants support, mentoring and sharing of cultural knowledge. The Murri Rangers do this through visiting sacred sites, making artefacts and tools such as nulla nullas and Boomerangs. This project not only created a sense of belonging for participants but also created many yarns, about why aboriginal people had these tools and what they were used for. The young men in the program, gained a sense of connection, learning about the land and their roles in protecting it, which was also

supported by T2S staff and Murri Rangers on a weekly basis. The murri rangers have also offered opportunities for the young people in the program to gain chainsaw tickets and forklift tickets, and work experience opportunities, which could lead to further employment.

**Child Safe Organisation Award** - or a demonstrated commitment to the ongoing journey of creating a child-focused culture that keeps children safe and well (in line with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations)

Charlene Reynolds Safeguarding Manager, YMCA of Brisbane

The YMCA of Brisbane, in conjunction with its national colleagues, has developed the 'Stay Safe, Tell Someone' program. Informed by children and young people, the program seeks to encourage children and young people to speak up and tell someone, if they see, hear or feel something that makes them feel unsafe. Children, young people and employees are all trained in the program, which is also communicated to parents, guardians and the wider community. The YMCA of Brisbane has also implemented a continuous improvement program to ensure that children and young people not just feel safe, but are safe at the Y. The YMCA of Brisbane is an early adopter of the Australian Childhood Foundation's accreditation program – a three-year cycle that involves ongoing communication with staff, volunteers and service users. YMCA has achieved and maintains the highest level of Safeguarding Children Accreditation with the Australian Childhood Foundation.

**Addressing overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children, and young people in the child protection system Award** – Outstanding contribution to addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and young people through policy, programs or practice

Faylene Hill from the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

The HALT Initiative commenced in 2018 and was created in collaboration with the Department of Child Safety and multiple Elders Groups within Greater Brisbane Region & Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. The HALT Collective (which means STOP) works in a true collaborative way to try and reduce over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system. Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations often already have a connection to families, so engagement and service delivery is well received by the family. There is a strong connection and level of respect between all the agencies and they provide the right services to the each of the family members at the right time. This may involve community Elders also participating in the support. All situations are explored on a case by case basis and actions and strategies developed and implemented. This initiative has been extremely successful and is such a great example of collaboration between government and Aboriginal non-government services focussed on the protection of children and young people. Members of this group go above and beyond and are making a genuine difference to the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering the statutory system.

**Education Initiative Award** – Development of an innovative approach, research or resource to promote child protection.

Mel Jenkins, Head of Department (Curriculum), Goondiwindi State School

Goondiwindi State Primary School have been working collaboratively with Act for Kids through an Individual Placement Support package to support young people in care to remain engaged in learning and within their school community. The school has provided a space for Act for Kids staff to

work 4 days per week with children who require intensive interventions. This space has been tailored to the children's needs. The Principal, Marni Morrison, and her staff have gone above and beyond to provide training and targeted interventions to the children and staff and to ensure responses to trauma-based behaviours are informed and positive. The school is actively involved with stakeholders to collaboratively increase safety for children. One referee noted that “the school is incredibly trauma informed and open to implementing innovative ways to respond to trauma. They have an ongoing commitment to working collaboratively with child protection. They go above and beyond..... They have a collaborative approach to working with kids. They are consistent and concerned with the children’s stability and wellbeing.”

**Youth Participation Award** – Involvement of young people in the planning of a local activity to promote child protection

Sandy Murdoch, Founder & CEO of TRACTION

TRACTION is a not-for-profit organisation that empowers young people to build positive futures through mentoring and hands-on learning designed to build confidence and skills. TRACTION believes that all young people deserve the opportunity to discover and develop their strengths and recognises that everybody learns differently, and some people don’t realise their potential in a classroom. That’s why TRACTION takes a different approach. With schools and referral partners, TRACTION engages young people aged 12-15 with early intervention support in a workshop environment, “on the tools”. In groups of six, each young person receives 54 hours of mentoring over ten weeks. In its flagship Bicycle Build program, young people get hands on experience in bike building and maintenance, riding skills and road safety awareness, and they keep the bicycles they build. TRACTION teaches respectful behaviour, responsibility, teamwork and a new way of learning, and in completing their own projects, young people experience a sense of success. Since 2015, TRACTION has helped over 1,500 vulnerable young people begin the journey to building their own future.

**Thriving Communities Initiative Award** - Any community operated program, initiative, event or campaign that focuses on enhancing child protection in our communities

Britt Sherwell - Program Coordinator, Family and Child Connect Sunshine Coast and Gympie, Act for Kids

‘Our community, our families, our children’ is a collaborative place-based response aimed at preventing child harm in a high-density community. This project was developed in response to the Sunshine Coast Local Level Alliance and partners’ worries about the safety of children and young people residing in the Community. This Community experiences significant vulnerabilities that are often intergenerational and hidden. In January 2019, consultation with a range of Government Departments and Community Service Organisations resulted in a decision to work collaboratively to strengthen service coordination to improve safety for children, young people and families. One referee described it as a focused, well formed, multi -disciplinary collaborative. It demonstrates that a “collaborative impact approach can gain inroads and make a difference in the system and inform government decisions.....” It’s a humanistic response in that it saw a vulnerable community and responded. It is collective impact all the way – managing and influencing up. It is about “setting up frameworks that put kids in the middle of everything and understanding how important children and their voices are.”