



# Doing Culture Better for Aboriginal Kids in OOHC

Lana Draper and  
Ebony Larrigo

Hunter Cultural Hub

*Aboriginal Wellbeing Conference*

# Doing Culture better for Aboriginal kids in OOHC

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Lana Draper, Occupational Therapist & PhD Candidate UoW

Artwork Credit: Cate McHughes



# Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the Gumbaynggirr people as the traditional custodians for time immemorial of the lands and waterways on which we meet, learn and connect today.

We also acknowledge the Elders past on whose shoulders we stand, Elders present who keep our knowledges strong, and Elders emerging who will take us into the future.



# Standpoint

## Ebony Larrigo

- Biripi Yagle woman
- Cultural Caseworker with DCJ
- Studying BA Applied Social Science
- Work and live on Awabakal, Wonnaruah, Worimi Countries
- Worked in Early Education, as Director and Educator



# Hunter Cultural Hub

## Background:

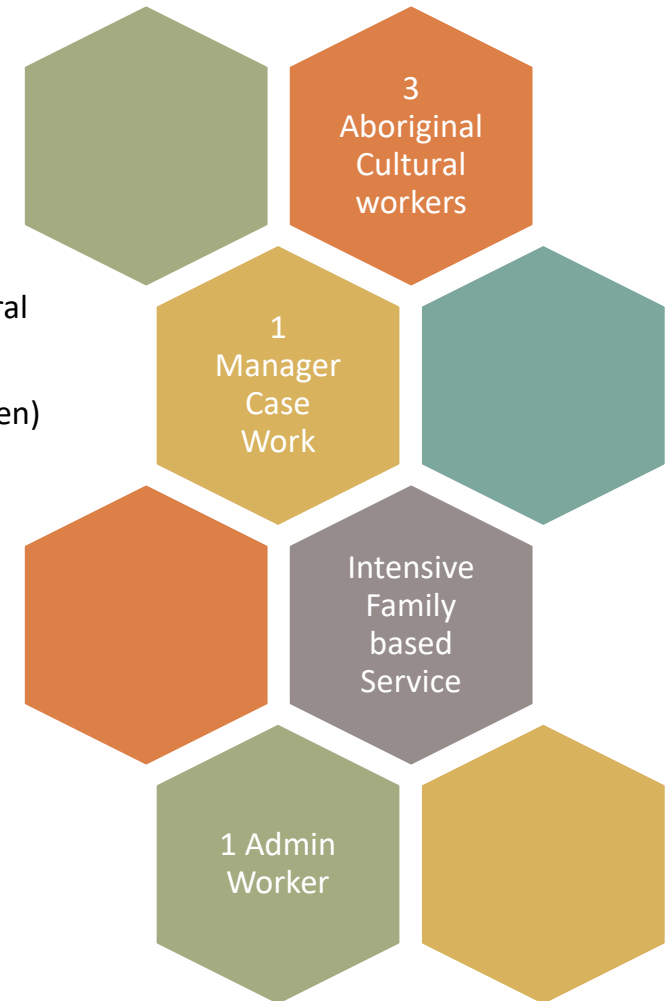
- Formed from recommendations in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997)
- Specialist unit that sits in DCJ targeting:
  - decreasing rates of entry into care
  - Improving cultural connection for Aboriginal children in OOHC
  - Increasing the frequency of restoration and/or guardianship orders
  - Increasing DCJ Staff cultural capabilities (training, consultations, mentoring)
- Located in a family friendly building in the community
- Currently employs 5 staff
- Areas covered – Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Maitland, Cessnock



# Hunter Cultural Hub

## Responsibilities:

- Family group conferencing
- Group supervision (supervision on case work practice)
- Aboriginal Practice panel (review of Aboriginal children in care and permanency domains, including cultural connection)
- Consultation (placement principles, cultural identity, best practice in working with Aboriginal families and children)
- Case Planning (advocating for families and children to have their wellbeing needs met)
- Preservation (early intervention)
- Restorations (advocating for children and families, guiding case work practice)
- PAC & Triage points (providing consultation)
- Cultural plans
- Family Action Plans (addresses what the worries are)
- ACMP (Aboriginal Case Management Policy – accountability towards consulting with community )



# Hunter District 2021 -2022

Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Maitland, Cessnock



**166**

per 1,000\*

Rate of Aboriginal children and young people involved in risk of significant harm (ROSH) reports, Hunter, 2021-22



**77**

per 1,000\*

Rate of Aboriginal children and young people involved in ROSH reports who were seen by DCJ caseworkers, Hunter, 2021-22



**7**

per 1,000\*

Rate of Aboriginal children and young people entering OOHC Hunter, 2021-22

Aboriginal children and young people are

2x more likely

to be involved in ROSH reports than non-Aboriginal children and young people

Aboriginal children and young people involved in ROSH reports are

4x more likely

to be seen by DCJ caseworkers than non-Aboriginal children and young people

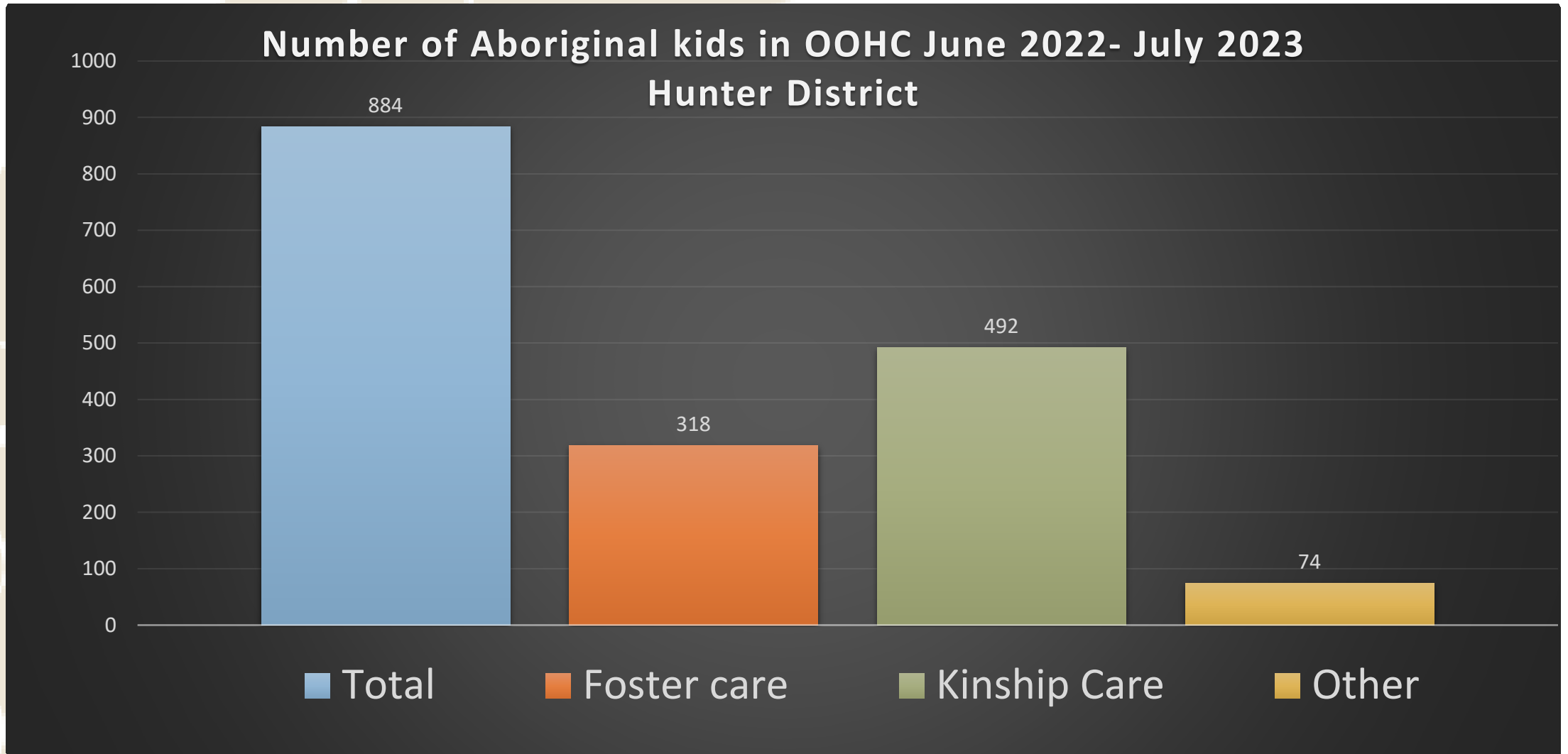
Aboriginal children and young people are

6x more likely

to enter OOHC than non-Aboriginal children and young people



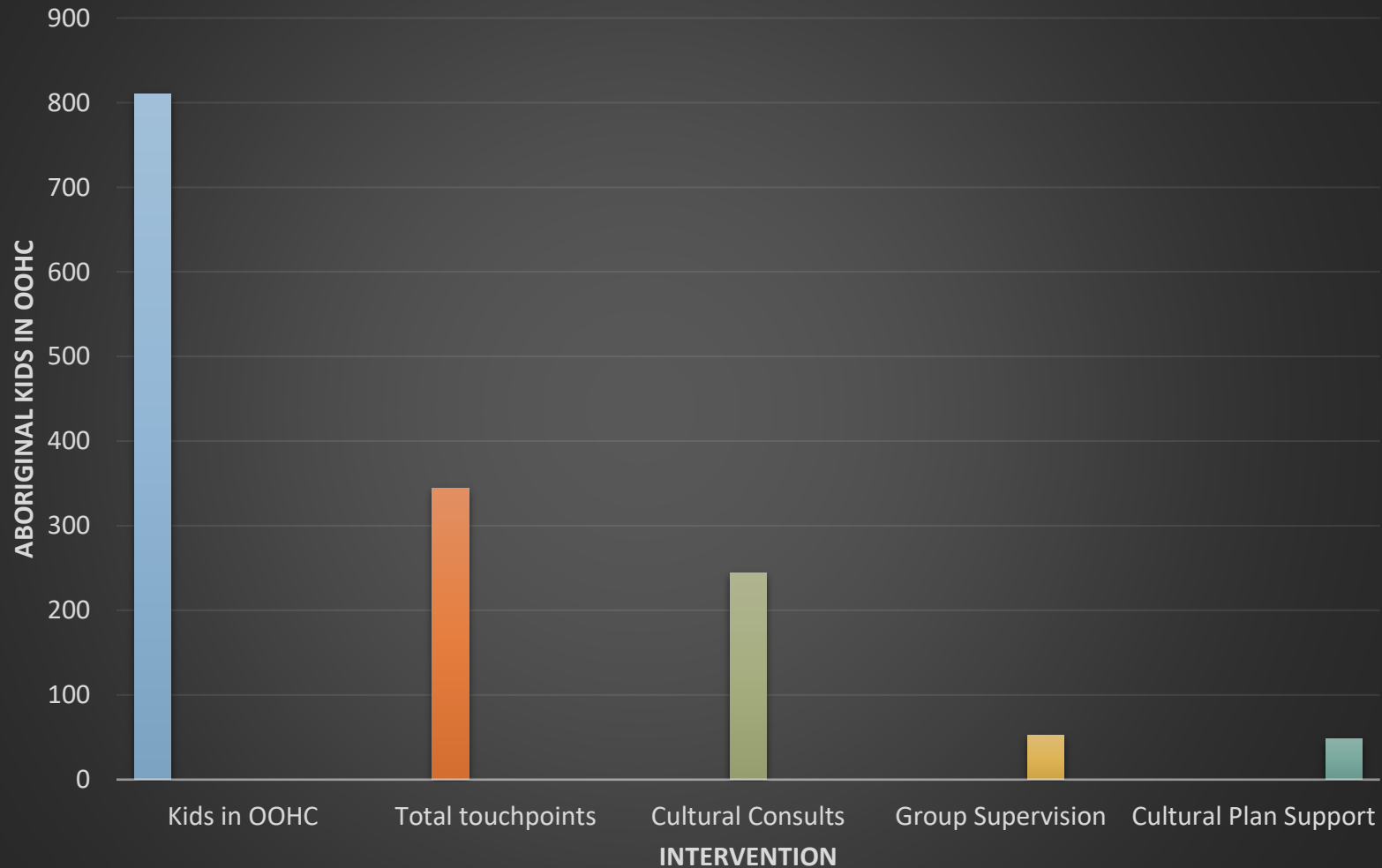
# Hunter Cultural Hub





# Hunter Cultural Hub

## Cultural Interventions Jan 2022 – Dec 2022



# Outcomes

## Short term outcomes

- Cultural plans
- Recommendations implemented
- Advocating for more short term orders
- Increasing family placements and contact
- Greater advocacy and child centred work

## Long term outcomes

- Reducing kids in care
- Increasing restorations
- Meaningful connection to culture
- Reduced contact with DCJ



# Integrating SEWB

- Drawing on personal Indigenous Knowledge and departmental knowledge to advocate
- Integrates with Practice Framework
- Winangay cards – designed specifically as a carer assessment tool
- **SEWB Yarning cards**® - provides natural discussion points that can be used in any situation, highly adaptable and beneficial in cultural contexts, broadens people's understanding of connection to culture



# Case Study

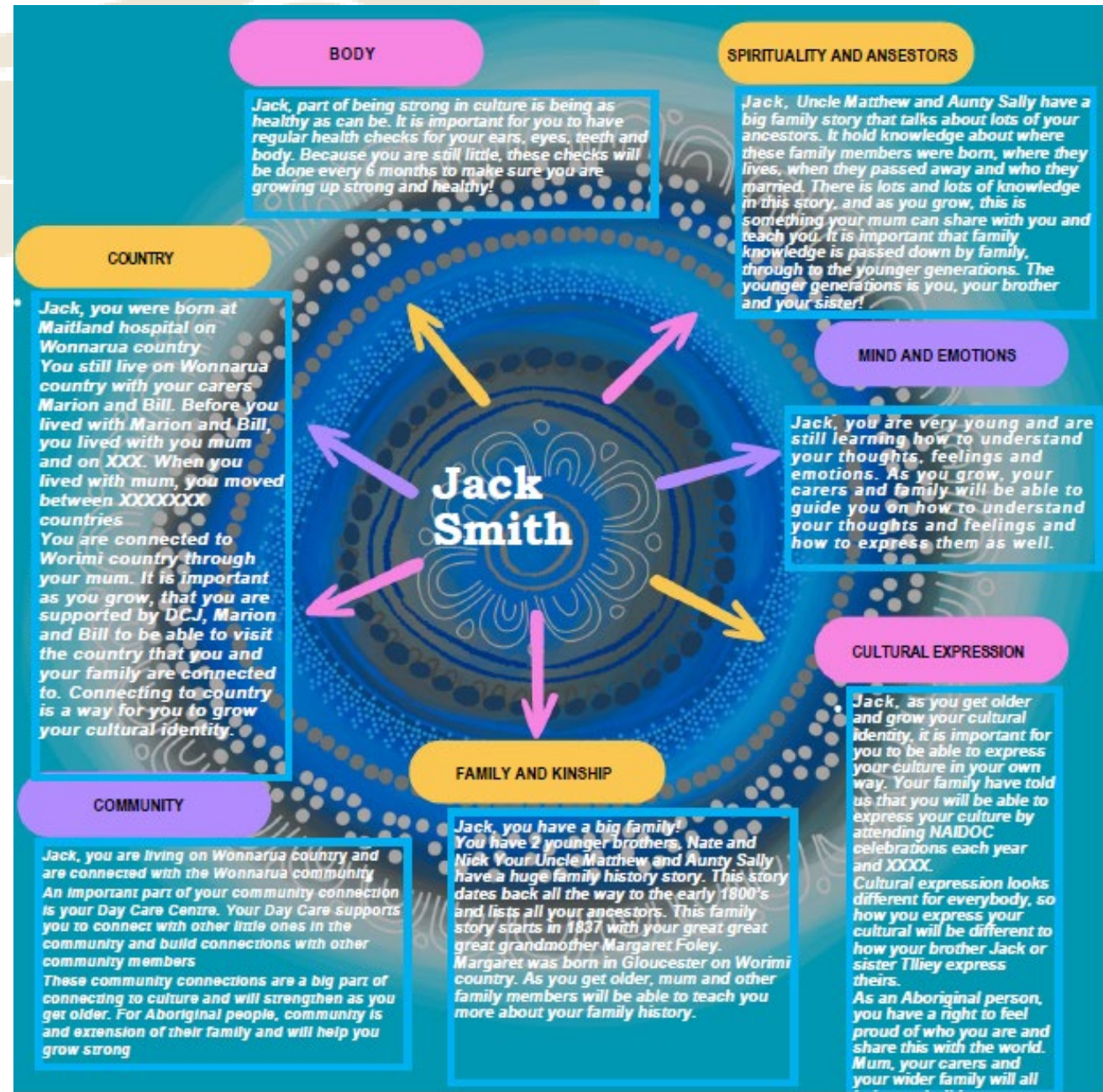
## My Story, My Connection



**Jack Smith**

**Born 2/12/2020 at Maitland Hospital on Wonnarua country**

Jack, this connection plan was drafted on the 06/06/2023 and holds information about your mob, culture and life connections can be added at any time. This is a living document that will hold significant information about your life, mob, culture and life connections and can be added to at any time. This is a living document that will hold a lot of significant information for you.



# Standpoint

## Lana Draper

- Ngiyampaa winarr of the Stone People, grew up on Wiradjuri Country
- Live and work on Awabakal, Wonnaruah, Worimi and Darkinjung Countries
- Occupational Therapist, LINKS Trauma Healing Service, DCJ
- PhD Candidate, University of Wollongong
- Mother, daughter, wife, grandmother, sister



# Research

***“The role of Culture in strengthening social and emotional wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in NSW OOHC”*** (AH&MRC submission 2111/23)

- Supervisors: Prof Kathleen Clapham, Director Ngarruwan Ngadju, University of Wollongong  
Dr Karen Fildes, University of Wollongong
- The SEWB Yarning cards that will be presented today are the Intellectual Property (IP) of Lana Draper and are currently in the implementation and evaluation phase of her PhD project that is focussed on integrating Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing and being into child protection.



# Intellectual Property

- **All information on the SEWB Yarning Cards<sup>©</sup>, provided in this or subsequent presentations and its associated resources, are the property of Lana Draper.**
- **Intellectual Property shared during this presentation is for the sole knowledge of the attendees and should not be disseminated without written permission from Lana Draper.**
- **Screenshots, recordings, or other duplications of materials are strictly prohibited and constitute a breach of ethics.**



# Partnerships & Collaborators

- Hunter Cultural Hub (DCJ)
- Muloobinba
- Wandiyali
- Hunter Knowledge Circle\*
- Ngarruwan Ngadju, First Peoples Health & Wellbeing Research Centre
- Dr Aunty Laurel Williams





# Social and Emotional Wellbeing

- Developed by Graham Gee, Pat Dudgeon, Clinton Schultz, Amanda Hart & Kerrie Kelly (all Aboriginal Psychologists)
- Defines Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concept of wellbeing
- Differs from Western concepts of mental health
- I being used to create mental health reform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people nationally
- Is an evidence-based culturally appropriate tool



SEWB Diagram adapted from Gee et al., (2014)



# SEWB Yarning cards © Lana Draper, 2021

- Developed in response for need to do culture better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids in child protection
- Based on the SEWB domains
- Are designed to help clinicians and case workers capture meaningful information on culture
- Have undergone several community consultations
- Will be undergoing evaluation to determine their impact
- Cultural Hub are research collaborators



# Connection to Community

## Community

**The young person's relationship  
to their community -  
not just their family**

- Is there a particular community or Country you feel most connected to?
- Who do you consider your Elders/Aunties/Uncles, outside of your blood family?
- Who can you turn to for support, rely on when you need help, or go to for advice? Neighbour, teacher, etc.
- Do you meet up with other Aboriginal mob?
- Are you linked in with any Aboriginal services/organisations? Medical service, land council, sporting teams, dance troupes, etc.

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# Connection to Family & Kinship

## Family & Kinship

**The young person's relationship to their whole family - not just parents and siblings**

- Who is in your family tree?
- Tell me about your cousins? Favourite, biggest, youngest, etc.
- Do you know the names/surnames in your family tree?
- Can you tell me about your family? Or the most significant people in your family?
- Do you have a strong family who help each other?
- Who keeps you strong?
- Do you have an older person looking out for you?
- Is there anything about your family you would like me to know?

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# Connection to Country

## Country

**The young person's relationship  
to the land and spirit beings**

- Is there a particular Country, land or sea, that you feel connected to?
- Do you know where your mob is from?
- Where do you feel most relaxed? Beach, bush, river, etc.

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# Connection to Body

## Body

**Physical wellbeing – age, weight, nutrition, illness, disability**

- Do you have any health conditions I should know about? Asthma, diabetes, etc. Are you seeing a doctor?
- Do you have trouble sleeping? Do you take a long time getting to sleep?
- What foods do you prefer to eat? What don't you like to eat?
- Do you know much about traditional foods?
- Do you exercise? What sports do you play?
- Do you find it hard to concentrate on school work? Or know how to get started?

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# Connection to Spirituality & Ancestors

## Spirituality & Ancestors

Worldview or beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, values

- Do you participate in any cultural practices that give you strength? Eg. Smoking ceremonies, yarning with mob, communion, etc.
- What would you like to do more of?
- Do you go on bush camps, back to country, go to the bush?
- Who taught you what's important? What do you think is important? Eg. Honesty, family, determination, loyalty
- Do you feel like someone is looking out for you? Eg. Ancestors, The Old fella's
- Do you see, smell, or feel things that make you think your ancestors are watching? Eg. A kookaburra is your Nan checking in on you

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# Connection to Cultural Expression & Events

## Cultural Expression & Events

Community events, celebrations or activities

- Do you participate in any cultural events that give you strength? Eg. NAIDOC week, Sorry Day, etc.
- Do you visit special locations?
- Do you celebrate any family traditions?
- Do you know or learn any cultural occupations, drawing, painting, dance, weaving, etc.
- Do you speak any traditional language?
- How do you express culture? TikTok, photo's, music, art, football, etc.

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# Connection to Mind & Emotions

## Mind & Emotions

**Not just the experience of mental health, but the whole spectrum of cognitive, emotional & psychological needs**

- What do you do to stay strong and keep yourself happy?
- What or who makes you feel safe?
- What makes you laugh?
- How do you cope when you are stressed?
- Have you thought about hurting yourself, or plans to suicide?
- Do you worry, feel lonely, get wild/angry a lot, laugh a lot?
- Where do you feel you belong?
- Do you struggle to concentrate on things?
- Are you forgetful?

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# Implications for practice

- Aligns with Aboriginal Case management Policy and Practice Framework
- Targeted case worker training – cultural planning
- Implementing in carer support group
- Has application across a range of program areas and decision making points



**Thank you!**

# QUESTIONS

