



QUEENSLANDERS AWARDED FOR SHINING A LIGHT ON CHILD PROTECTION

Ordinary Queenslanders who have done extraordinary things to help keep our vulnerable and young people safe will be recognised at the Queensland Child Protection Week (QCPW) awards ceremony at Parliament House today.

QCPW Chair Anna Nolan said the event will be an opportunity for our State to say *'thank you'* to these absolute champions of child protection for the great work they have done to prevent child abuse and promote the value of our children.

"From a committed front-line QPS Child Protection Investigator to a grandmother who generously volunteers to gently hold the hand of a frightened child during daunting Court processes, this year's eight QCPW award winners are all deserving of their accolades and for the focus they bring to at-risk children or victims of neglect or mistreatment," said Ms Nolan.

"The awards ceremony marks the launch of QCPW which runs from Sunday, 2 September until Saturday, 9 September. The week will be celebrated with a variety of festivities being held around the State that have been organised by rural and metro communities who applied for regional grants of \$5,000 and up to \$1,000 for activity grants.

"All of the events held around Queensland during Child Protection Week help shine a light on child protection and spread the important message that protecting children is everybody's business."

Child Protection Week was the brain child of the Management Committee of Protect All Children Today (PACT). The committee organised a coalition of agencies involved in child protection to stage the first annual Child Protection Week in Brisbane in 1986. Now in its 32nd year, Child Protection Week is a national event held during the first full week of September.

The QCPW Committee is made up of 27 organisations - all concerned with child protection issues, who work together to coordinate a community campaign. The week-long event is funded by the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women.

The Honourable Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Di Farmer said the aim of Child Protection Week is to focus attention on the issue of child abuse and ways it can be prevented as well as promoting child and family well-being.

"It is humbling to see so many people dedicated to protecting Queensland's most vulnerable children, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart for the work they do each and every day," she said.

"Child Safety really is everyone's responsibility, and together we can work towards making sure every Queensland child has the same hope and opportunity as the next."

[ENDS] Biographies of QCPW Award winners & media contact details follow.

BIOGRAPHIES - QUEENSLAND CHILD PROTECTION WEEK AWARD WINNERS

Professional (Non-government) Award: **Jo Bryant**

Jo Bryant joined Protect All Children Today Inc. (PACT), in August 2004. As PACT's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Jo is passionate about ensuring vulnerable children and young people victims of crime receive optimum support through the daunting criminal court process. Some of the numerous initiatives Jo has implemented have been the listing of child related court matters early in the day to accommodate a child's limited attention span; the introduction of the Post Evidence Feedback Survey to gain direct feedback from children and young people in relation to giving evidence and their overall court experience; and changes in the way District Court Judges interact with children. *Her child advocacy work is just amazing. She keeps her finger on the pulse and is always there for the staff and volunteers of PACT.*

Professional (Government) Award: **Detective Sergeant Anthony Joseph McNae**

Anthony is currently in his 21st year of serving the Queensland Community as a QPS front-line Child Protection Investigator. Anthony remains highly motivated, focused and dedicated to the protection of children, an area of policing with extremely high demands and stressors. Anthony has implemented a number of valued projects which have engaged with children to make a sustained impact. Anthony was solely responsible for conceptualizing and implementing Project Pathways – Leading you to a Safer Home. Anthony's research was at the cutting edge of the QPS recognizing the large percentages of innocent children involved in domestic and family violence relationships. Anthony is described as *a man of impeccable integrity who values child protection and has been a stalwart for many many years.*

Volunteer Award: **Jan Brown**

Jan Brown has been a Child Witness Support Volunteer with Protect All Children Today (PACT) since June 2010 and a Volunteer Team Leader since 2013. In this role she supports vulnerable children and young people required to give evidence in daunting criminal court proceedings. Jan has personally supported over 385 child victims and witnesses plus their family members. Jan was elected to the PACT Board of Management in 2015 and has ensured the Board remain focussed on core business and take into consideration the needs of vulnerable children and young people and fellow Volunteers, when making strategic decisions. *Jan sees her roles with PACT as an opportunity to play some small part in improving the lives of vulnerable children and young people. She goes above and beyond in her support of PACT.*

Regional Program Award: School-based Early Intervention Panels - **Angela Kerlake, Claire Oliver, Jamie Coburn, Francette Kerk and Kerri Chard**

The development of the Early Intervention Panels was established through the project work of DET Student Protection Advisor, Kerri Chard in conjunction with the Principal Child Protection Practitioners. The purpose of the panel is to build strong collaborative partnerships in a local area, to enable early identification of worries for children and families and improve referral pathways into Family and Child Connect, Intensive Family Support and Family Wellbeing Services, ensuring that families get connected to the right services at the right time. In the Logan catchment alone, more than 95 families have been discussed and referred to services. As word of mouth is spreading about the success of the program many schools are approaching Kerri and Child Safety to have a panel implemented at their school. *The program has resulted in really good engagement with families at the early intervention stage which has prevented the need for statutory intervention.*

Education Initiative Award: **Daniel Morcombe Foundation – Australia’s Biggest Child Safety Lesson**

Australia’s Biggest Child Safety Lesson was a live 20 minute online broadcast on this day and reached over 100 000 students. In Queensland, it is estimated that a minimum of 55 000 students watched the lesson at the time it was streamed. The lesson supported educators, parents and carers to continue talking about personal safety strategies with children in an ongoing way. The lesson covered key concepts of body ownership, early warning signs and identifying adults who can help if you feel unsafe. Feedback from participating schools indicates that the lesson was successful with over 90% saying they would participate again and it helped to support teachers to teach key child safety messages and communicate with parents/ carers. . Participating in the lesson enabled some children and young people to either recognise that they had experienced abuse or identify a safe person to tell. *This was a wonderful way to shine a light on child protection from an education perspective.*

Youth Participation Award: **Alethea Beetson – Digi Youth Arts**

Alethea partnered with Churches of Christ Qld to work with a group of eleven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care, to produce and perform a play at the Powerhouse, using storytelling to describe their experiences of racism and being in care. This involved two cultural camps, many rehearsals and resulted in a three night performance. As part of the initial engagement, young people got to attend a "back of house" cultural tour at Queensland Museum to see cultural artefacts. The impact of the young people of telling their stories on stage was incredibly powerful. Her referee said *“Alethea is incredibly passionate about young people connecting with their culture. I could not say enough words about how inspirational she is. She makes you want to be the best person you can be”.*

Media and Communications Award: **Kay McGrath**

Kay McGrath has been a voice for child protection for more than 34 years. As one of the original Child Protection Week Committee member Kay has worked to bring all child protection non-government organisations together. Working together successfully has created more momentum in child protection than each organisation could individually, driving awareness of child protection to improve outcomes for the safety and wellbeing of children. Throughout Child Protection Week Kay gives generously of her time, attending or performing as MC at numerous events for several organisations. Her attendance gives credibility and profile to these events, which in turn draws attention to the event, Child Protection Week and child abuse as an issue. Kay also draws on her varied and extensive journalism experience to provide advice to the non-government organisations she supports on how to successfully gain media coverage for themselves and the issue. *Kay is consistently approachable, knowledgeable, friendly, helpful and well respected by her peers. Her commitment and dedication to promoting child safety across Queensland should be commended.*

Addressing Overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and young people in the child protection system Award: **Joanne Borg**

In her capacity as Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Practice Leader for Child Safety (FNQ region), Joanne developed, led and implemented the 'Reconnection' project. The project identified that a high number of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children and young people in alternative care, had been, or are at risk of being disconnected from their family, community and culture. The project was educational for all Child Safety staff, and reconnected a number of children back to their families, communities and culture. The project is now considered to be imbedded in practice across the Far North Queensland region, and will be ongoing until all Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children and young people in alternative care are connected to their culture in a meaningful manner. *Jo has had more than 30 years working in the sector. She is a very smart, hard working person. Jo deserves a Nobel Prize for her hard work.*

For more details on grant recipients or award winners, please email media@childprotectionweek.net or telephone Danyelle Nolan on 0408 410 930.

To find a QCPW event near you, visit <https://childprotectionweek.org.au/events/>