



## QUEENSLAND CHAMPIONS OF CHILD PROTECTION RECOGNISED

Queenslanders that work with vulnerable and at-risk children from the very northern tip of the Cape down to the Gold Coast are being recognised as part of Queensland Child Protection Week (QCPW) 2020 celebrations.

There are more than 2,700kms between them, but 11 award winners will come together at Parliament House this Thursday, 3 September to be presented with QCPW awards for the profound impact they have had on the lives of children who were otherwise lacking hope, joy, commitment and kindness.

QCPW Chair Sara Evans said children needed role models in their lives like this year's award recipients, so they could begin to believe in themselves and try to overcome challenge and adversity. "One of my favourite quotes is Maya Angelou's: *"When you know better, you do better"*," said Ms Evans.

"When I think of child protection I think this quote sums up part of our journey - the part that has required constant advocacy to improve the lives of children and young people and their families. The part that has led to significant systemic and practice reform brought about by people like this year's award winners - those courageous enough to navigate a path forward in a quest for improvement."

QCPW was formed 34 years ago and this year sees the introduction of three new awards. They are the 'Thriving Communities Initiative', 'Transition 2 Success' and 'Child Safe Organisation'.

QCPW kicks off this Sunday, 6 September (Father's Day) and runs until next Saturday, 12 September.

The week will be celebrated with a variety of COVID-safe activities being held across the State.

Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence Di Farmer said 2020 had been one of the most complex and challenging years in living memory.

"COVID-19 has created a perfect storm for many of Queensland's vulnerable families and children," Ms Farmer said.

"I know community organisations and child safety professionals have noticed a stark increase in the complexity of problems confronting at-risk families during the COVID pandemic.

"Thank you to the volunteers and professionals recognised by this year's awards for your enormous support and dedication to the safety of vulnerable young Queenslanders.

"Child safety is everybody's business has never been a more pertinent message to share during Child Protection Week as Queensland begins its COVID-19 recovery.

"Congratulations to this year's Queensland Champions of Child Protection for your hard work, compassion and commitment."

[ENDS] Thursday, 3 September

For more details on award winners, please telephone Danyelle Nolan on 0408 410 930 or email [media@childprotectionweek.net](mailto:media@childprotectionweek.net).

### **Professional (Non-Government) Award Category**

*Outstanding contribution to child protection at a practice, policy or service development level within the public service*

#### **Winner: Lalaria Tusa, Anglicare Southern Queensland**

Lalaria Tusa is a proud Kuku Yalanji woman who was born and raised on her traditional lands of Mossman Far North Queensland. Lalaria demonstrates an enduring commitment to the education and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, not just for First Nation's children but for all children and young people.

Working in partnership with local community groups, Lalaria developed and implemented the Jarjums Connect Group, a fortnightly group designed to foster an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture for all carers, children and young people linked with Anglicare Southern Queensland's Gold Coast FKC service. The program also provided opportunities for First Nation children in care to connect with each other and take pride in their cultures.

Lalaria's passion and pride in her culture has made a significant difference in increasing cultural safety and connection to country, community and culture for Jarjums in the child protection system.

#### **Referee comment:**

"Lalaria deserves to be recognised for the amazing contribution she is making to the lives of young children in care, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Lalaria works mostly with non-indigenous carers and she creates a safe place for them to learn about the culture of the First Nations children." Steve Wood, Service Manager.

### **Professional (Government) Award Category**

*Outstanding contribution to promoting child protection issues in their capacity as a professional working in the child protection (or related) field.*

#### **Winner: The Community Youth Response**

In November 2019 the Community Youth Response Co-responder model consisting of one Queensland Police Service employee and one Department of Youth Justice employee began co-locating on weekend evenings throughout the Logan district.

The model was the first of its kind with QPS and Youth Justice employees co-locating and patrolling together as a dedicated response to youth protection in the district. In the first six months of operation, the model achieved quality outcomes including: engagement of youth into Youth Justice and other programs, location of missing children, diverting youth from custody and the criminal justice system, transport of youth to places of safety and a reduction in youth offending and victimisation.

#### **Referee comment:**

"The CYR is a true multi-agency response to a complex issue. When we see government agencies working together to achieve agreeable outcomes it has to be a win. It's very hard to get agencies working together so well as they are in CYR. They harness the skills and resources of the individual agencies to focus on the kids". Denzil Clark, Detective Superintendent.

### **Volunteer Award Category**

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

#### **Winner: Elizabeth Melvin, The Pyjama Foundation**

Elizabeth Melvin has been a volunteer with The Pyjama Foundation for eight years, and in this time has made an immeasurable difference in the lives of children living in foster care.

Pyjama Angel volunteers visit children in out-of-home care to empower them with learning, life skills and confidence. Often these children come from traumatic backgrounds and busy homes, and don't get the joy of spending one-on-one time with a trusted, positive adult.

#### **Referee comment:**

“Elizabeth represents our high quality, dedicated and well-educated volunteers. She goes well up and beyond what we would ever expect of her. She has the most amazing connection with this young person. He is calm and engaged in education and this is all because of Elizabeth”. Bronwyn Sheehan, CEO & Founder, Pyjama Foundation

### **Regional Program Award Category**

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

#### **Winner: NPA Family and Community Services - Client Services Program**

NPA Family and Community Services (NPAFACS) serves all five communities of the Northern Peninsula Area – in far north QLD on the door step of the Torres Strait. The program provides social support services to the people of the Northern Peninsula Area that enable them to address personal difficulties and assist the broader community to address social justice issues.

Over the past 2 years the program has run nearly 100 community activities and public awareness campaigns. These have included large gatherings and feasts for reconciliation week and Mabo day, Domestic Violence month community BBQs, a men's camp, playgroups, family wellbeing parenting sessions, and youth programs.

The program collaborates across all facets of the community and is unparalleled when it comes to engaging with other service providers to achieve positive outcomes for children and their families. The program deserves significant acknowledgement of its community campaigning and activities which motivate and build family and community capacity to raise secure and connected children.

#### **Referee comment:**

“I love that they are so aware of culture. Culture is alive there. It's a core ingredient in how they meet and work with families and children. They are so effective because the community know that they understand and respect their cultures”. Greta Galloway

### **Education Initiative Award Category**

*Development of an innovative approach, research or resource to promote child protection.*

#### **Winner: Multi-Agency Re-engagement Program 'MARA'**

The education initiative, Multi-Agency Re-engagement ASDAN Program, otherwise known as MARA, creates a positive environment for children who haven't attended school for prolonged periods. Many of the children and young people supported through MARA had disengaged from the education system and were involved in the youth justice system. Some were in out of home care, some homeless and others at home but not attending school.

MARA focuses on wellbeing, relationships and involvement in learning. The program tracks individual student progress and engagement. This information is used to support student attendance, transition from detention to school, engagement in community programs and support to achieve their individual goals. Despite their background, the children and young people involved with the program have seen strong improvements in self-esteem and many have achieved recognised qualifications.

#### **Referee comment:**

"The program has no limits, its adaptable to meet the vocational and educational needs of the student – and caters for such a wide variety. It would be wonderful to see the program expanded because it looks at a holistic outcome for a child".

### **Youth Participation Award Category**

*Involvement of young people in the planning of a local activity to promote child protection.*

#### **Winner: Brisbane Catholic Education's Student Voice Initiative**

The Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) Student Voice Initiative facilitates a system wide approach for BCE staff to consult with and partner with students to make BCE schools safer, more inclusive and connected communities for all students.

The initiative began in 2017 by listening to students to understand the challenges Years 7, 8 and 9 students experience at school, identify the issues that impact on students' learning experiences, to unpack the barriers to student voice, and discover what authentic engagement looked like to students.

Over 2018 – 2019, Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) has had a big focus has been a safety discussions with students to understand students' perceptions of safety, to understand the issues that positively and negatively impact on students' sense of safety and belonging at school. Key aspects of the project have been Community Co Creation which has included a Student Voice Consultant Team, which consists of 15 students from 14 BCE schools. A key achievement of this team has been co-designing, hosting and facilitating the BCE Festival of Ideas which was attended by 50 students who developed an action plan for 2020 to address safety and belonging in schools.

#### **Referee comment:**

"The team has gone above and beyond (weekends and after hours) to create a program which facilitates students' ideas and their understanding about what makes a safe school. There has been a cultural shift for the organisation through their work". *Penny Gordon, Professional Coach*

### **Media & Communications Award Category**

*An article, news story, series, publication, campaign or communications strategy that demonstrates a significant contribution to highlighting child protection issues*

#### **Winner: 'We're just kids as well' media campaign**

The We're just kids as well media campaign recommended strategies and processes for improving support for kinship carers. The innovative work of carers and programs in Queensland was highlighted and received widespread media coverage on radio, TV and online. Young carers were interviewed to tell their stories.

Utilising the ABC JJJ network was a key to strong coverage with mentions on news and a feature story on the drive Hack program. ABC radio locally and throughout Queensland also featured news stories and program interviews. Strong TV coverage was also achieved with ABC and Channel Ten. There were 14 prominent news articles, interviews, photos and broadcast items 3144 times on 455 TV, radio stations and print media publications.

It raised awareness of the issues facing kinship carers and the agencies that support them. The campaign called for improved provision of services to support kinship carers as well as revealing the difficulties and challenges they face.

The campaign included widespread and extensive a collaboration with peaks and non-government organisations.

#### **Referee comment:**

"A thorough and well reaching campaign. The organisers made people feel comfortable to share their stories – particularly young people."

### **Thriving Communities Initiative Award Category**

*Community operated program, initiative, event or campaign that focuses on enhancing child protection in our communities*

#### **Winner: Chancellor State College's Talking Families Initiative**

The Chancellor State College 'Talking Families Initiative' aims to create a school community supporting each other as parents. The Initiative Partnership team includes key College staff, P&C alongside the Queensland Family and Child Commission, Local Level Alliance, Family and Child Connect and the Department of Child Safety with shared goals of strengthening Parent to Parent Connection, Parent to School Connection and School to Community Connection across a range of school activities.

The Initiative has been successful in creating a culture where parents feel supported and comfortable seeking help from school staff and other parents.

The Chancellor State College - Talking Families Initiative was the first Talking Families Schools Initiative to be developed and implemented, and the Chancellor State College model has now been replicated in other schools across the State.

#### **Referee comment:**

"Lasting positive change for a community comes when it is driven by the community for the community and not imposed by agencies outside. The Chancellor Talking Families Initiative has at its core the needs, wellbeing and aspirations of the families, both parents/caregivers and children, of the Chancellor State College community."

**Addressing overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and young people in the child protection system Award Category**

*Outstanding contribution to addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and young people through policy, programs or practice.*

**Winner: Tammy Wallace, Churches of Christ in Queensland**

Tammy is a proud Jirrabal woman with strong cultural ties to the Rainforest People of the Atherton Tablelands. Tammy is an emerging elder in her family and an inspiration to all who are fortunate to work alongside her. For the last 25 plus years, Tammy has worked closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities partnering to develop and implement various policies, programs and service delivery within both government and non-government roles.

In her role at Churches of Christ in Queensland as Strategic Manager of Engagement and Inclusions, Tammy has developed, championed and commenced implementation of a Cultural Practice Framework across the Children, Youth and Families programs. The Cultural Practice Framework is innovative in measuring and informing our cultural practice and strengthens cultural connections for Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, carers and staff resulting in meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

**Referee comment:**

Tammy has made a significant difference in improving safety and resilience of children through strengthening positive connection to culture and community.

**Transition 2 Success Initiative Award Category**

*Outstanding young person or outstanding contribution made by local community groups or local business 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.*

**Winner: Adrian Crush, Peirson Farms General Manager**

Peirson Farms assists at risk young people to link with industry and offers young people the opportunity gain on the job experience within industries such as construction, horticulture, hospitality, resources and infrastructure.

Peirson Services work closely with the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre. They have employed two staff from the Centre to assist young people with transition back into community and with linking back into engagement activities on their release.

Young people are involved in renovating farms houses, Building sheds and land development and conservation projects with the assistance from local tradespeople and Peirson staff to complete certificate level courses.

This has led to young people staying out of detention and assisting to choose a positive direction in life. This has also shown to have a positive impact on the family relationships.

**Referee comment:**

“Adrian goes above and beyond to support the young people. He is very patient; has so many skills that he can pass on ‘jack of all trades’, he is able to share this in a way that is brilliant for young people accessing the program. We are very lucky to have a partnership with the farm and Adrian”.

### **Child Safe Organisation Award Category**

*Outstanding implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations to protect children from harm, and/or creating an organisational culture that fosters child safety and wellbeing*

#### **Winner: Act for Kids**

Over the last couple of years Act for Kids have worked on an organisational project to ensure they are a Child Safe Organisation. The project involved a number of components to embed the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

All current and future activities are embedding the National Child Safe Principles into the culture of Act for Kids. Training on Child Harm is mandatory for all staff and volunteers and must be done annually. All policies highlight the issue of child harm and make it a consideration across the organisation. Asking children and young people about their wellbeing is seen as a high priority.

The project also aims to increase the understanding of other organisations and assist them to embed the National Principles into their everyday work. This has included the development of:

- An eLearning package based on the Act for Kids Child Protection Toolkit to be shared with other organisations
- Development of training for organisations to assist them to embed the National Child Safe Principles.

#### **Referee comment:**

“Act for Kids provides a responsive, caring and innovative culture which has been embedded within the organisation. The staff of the organisation are well supported and skilled.”

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

