

## MEDIA RELEASE

**Minister for Community Services**  
**The Hon. Linda Burney MP**



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Thursday 9 July 2009

### **Minister launches life story book for Aboriginal children in care**

Community Services Minister Linda Burney marked NAIDOC Week by launching a unique life story book, designed especially for Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care.

Ms Burney launched the book today when she officially opened the new premises for the out-of-home care service operated by Link-Up (NSW) in Western Sydney.

*My Life Story Book*, developed by the NSW Department of Community Services, is designed to assist Aboriginal children maintain a sense of identity after being placed in care.

“This is a keepsake that these young people can use to record memories and special steps in their childhood and as they grow up. There is space for photos and stories of their achievements so they have a document of their early years,” Ms Burney said.

“We need to remember that children in out-of-home care don’t often have the same opportunity as other kids do to reminisce about milestones with their parents – when they took their first step, losing their first tooth and visits to grandparents and the places where their parents were from.

“This book will ensure they grow up with a sense of connectedness to family, kinship and community.”

Ms Burney said the book is made more important given the over-representation of Aboriginal children in the out-of-home care system.

“More than one third of children and young people in out-of-home care are Aboriginal. This is despite the fact that Aboriginal children make up only four per cent of the young population in New South Wales.

“We need resources like the *My Life Story Book* to make sure these children can engage with their family history and culture.”

In addition to personal activities, the book includes information about Aboriginal culture and provides a list of important resources, services, websites and literature.

Link-UP CEO Glendra Stubbs agrees that Aboriginal children in out-of-home care deserve the opportunity to grow up with knowledge of their heritage.

“I have seen first hand the past practices of not honouring this information and the despair in trying to, as an adult, piece one’s life back together. There are always gaps. These gaps, such as not having a birth certificate or not knowing where you were born, become a big black hole that cannot be filled,” she said.

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“We welcome the Minister’s commitment to provide children with the stories of their life in their own book. You can not become a strong tree if you don’t know your roots.”

Link-up Aboriginal Corporation is an organisation with a long history of supporting Aboriginal people placed in out-of-home care through adoption, fostering, removal, separation or institutionalisation. Today, it also provides out-of-home care for Aboriginal children who are unable to live with their parents.

*My Life Story Book* was developed in collaboration with the Aboriginal Child, Family & Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) and the CREATE Foundation.

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