



Link-Up (Qld)

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

STILL BRINGING THEM HOME



Dancing through adversity:

The unstoppable spirit of Patricia Morris Banjo

Page 14

IN THIS EDITION:

CONNECTING THE DOTS:

Jennifer Chantrell's 'back to country' reunion
Page 6

DOING IT FOR SAM:

Marie Gilliland honours her late cousin
Page 8

VALE JOHN BRADY SNR:

A life of love, strength and devotion
Page 17

HOME OF HEALING:

Yarrabah's new wellbeing centre
Page 22



Acknowledgement of Country

Link-Up (Old) would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we all work, live and play. We would also like to pay respect to the elders past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reading this magazine.

Cover image:
Founder of the Deaf Indigenous Dance Group, Patricia Morris Banjo (PHOTO: FARLEY WARD SHUTTERSTORM PHOTOGRAPHY)

Disclaimer:

Whilst every effort has been made to respect cultural traditions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this publication may contain images of and references to people who are deceased.

Inside cover image:
Thomson River, near Longreach Queensland (PHOTO: THURTELL PHOTOGRAPHY)

Link-Up (Qld) Magazine

We invite submissions from community, clients, partners and associates. Do you have a story about your reunion and healing journey?

Email our friendly team at communications@link-upqld.org.au with your story ideas, special updates and events.

View our past volumes online at www.link-upqld.org.au



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Welcome

Welcome to this edition of the Link-Up (Qld) Magazine. It is with great pride that I reflect on the ongoing work our team does to reconnect families and heal the wounds of the past for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The stories shared in these pages, from tributes to those we've lost to tales of newfound beginnings, highlight the resilience and strength of our communities.

As we look ahead, we acknowledge the challenges but remain committed to making a lasting impact. The dedication of our staff, the support of our partners, and the courage of those we serve give me confidence that we will continue to foster healing and unity throughout Queensland.

Thank you for your continued support of Link-Up (Qld). Together, we are building a future where every person knows their heritage and belongs.



Kenny

Ken Murphy
Chairperson
Link-Up (Qld)

In this edition...

APRIL-JUNE 2024

BRINGING THEM HOME

Jennifer Chantrell
Page 6

Alfred Joyce
Page 12

Patrick Riggs
Page 20

Marim Brown
Page 26

IN THE COMMUNITY

Reconciliation Week @ QPAC
Page 10

Dancing through adversity
Page 14

Vale Uncle John Brady Snr
Page 17

Yarrabah's new wellbeing centre
Page 22

Island of Origin
Page 32

2024 Sorry Day Breakfast
Page 34

FROM THE TEAM

Marie Gilliland: Doing it for Sam
Page 8

Link-Up (Qld) Board visits Far North
Page 24

Tahj Minniecon: Guiding home and giving back
Page 30

Virginia Clarke's Trek for Rights
Page 33

Office of the Public Guardian
Presentation
Page 36

Upcoming events
Page 38

CEO's Message

Link-Up (Qld) is celebrating a special milestone this year – 40 years of service to our Stolen Generations, culminating in a Gala Anniversary Dinner on 28th November 2024 at Brisbane City Hall. The gala event will highlight Link-Up (Qld)'s history, recognising those involved in the early years and many others, including directors and staff, who have significantly contributed over the years, impacting the lives of our people. You can read more about this event on page 11.

The Board of Directors recently visited North Queensland, a great opportunity to connect with local communities. Visits to Gindaja Healing and Treatment Centre in Yarrabah and Mulungu Aboriginal Health Service in Mareeba were eye-opening for directors who haven't visited the north, showcasing the important work these organisations do. It also deepened their appreciation of the collaborative relationships our staff maintain with organisations in regional and remote communities.

Staff wellbeing is paramount at Link-Up (Qld). Alongside offering supervision and EAP by qualified psychologists, team-building activities and time to refresh are vital for workplace wellness. Our staff recently participated in a team-building workshop focused on teamwork, problem-solving, multitasking, communication, and collaboration. It was a lot of fun, with two-way communication key – in the end, we all did OK.

We welcome Andy, our Digital Content and Publications Officer, to the Link-Up (Qld) team. We value the skills and experience Andy brings, especially as we prepare for our 40th Anniversary Gala Dinner.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Pat

Patricia Thompson AM
Chief Executive Officer
Link-Up (Qld)



About Us

Link-Up (Qld) provides services to reunite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by forced removal. We carry out research to identify and locate your family members. By doing this, we help to encourage healing and personal growth with the knowledge of who you are and where you come from.

Our services are for Stolen Generations – individuals, families and communities who now have a longing to connect with their heritage after being separated from it. This separation could have occurred through adoption, fostering, removal or institutionalisation carried out under past Australian Government policies.

A person may approach us because they want to learn more about their identity and who they are. Or they want to pass on their culture to their family. They may have already tried searching on their own but with no luck. Or they could simply want closure and to find peace. Whatever your motivations are, you will be welcomed and supported.

With every client, our team will act with respect, sensitivity and hospitality. We know that each person will take something different from their reunion and healing process. Throughout the Link-Up journey, our Caseworkers will be in regular contact, and our Counsellors are available whenever you wish to have a yarn.

Our History

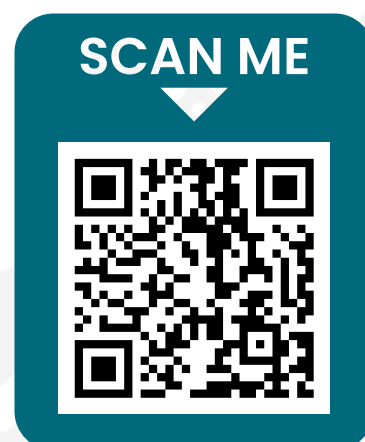
Link-Up (Qld) has been offering our reunification services for over 40 years. We got started addressing the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who felt they were the victim of a society that dominated them, that left them with no control and tried to erase their identity.

The spotlight slowly began to turn to these issues following the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The Royal Commission found that many of the deaths investigated were people who had been separated from their family and communities due to the actions of past government policies.

The Bringing Them Home report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 1997 confirmed the devastating effects that the removal of children has had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and cultures.

Backed by the finding of these reports, Link-Up (Qld) has continued – and will continue – to reunite families and communities so that the healing can now take place.

Scan the QR code below to learn more about us and our services for Stolen Generations survivors and descendants.





CONNECTING THE DOTS

Jennifer Chantrell's reunion story

My name is Jennifer Chantrell, I was born in 1954 in Adelaide South Australia. I was living in Gympie Queensland in 2018, when I contacted Link-Up (Qld) to ask for help in locating a missing family member, a sister, believed to be born in 1958. Several relatives had spoken about my mother being pregnant when we lived in Mildura NSW in the late 1950s, and I also had a handwritten letter from my older sister who confirmed that a baby girl was born to our mother and adopted out in 1958.

I knew that Link-Up (Qld) was the best place to start searching for my lost sister as they had the reputation for having access to resources that were not always available to the average person, and they also had a wealth of experience in locating and reuniting family members who had become separated from their mob through a variety of reasons. Link-Up (Qld) accepted me as client. While Link-Up (Qld) was unable, despite a very thorough investigation, to locate my missing sister, they provided me with a huge collection of family information. I was truly impressed by the effort to research my family's background. Link-Up (Qld) also organised a family reunion which turned out to be the most amazing timing for an incredibly special event.

But first, a brief outline of my family history. My father, Robert Chantrell, was born in Sydney in 1933; he was non-Indigenous. My mother, Dulcie Newchurch, was born in 1936 in the city of Adelaide, on Kurna Country. She was one of six children born to Timothy Jack Johnson Newchurch and Gwendolyn Newchurch, nee Sansbury. Both were born on Narungga Country at the Point Pearce Aboriginal Mission located on the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia. The Newchurch and

Sansbury families, were, and still are, large clans. They have numerous descendants. This is a good place to insert the news that Native Title to the entire Yorke Peninsula was granted to the Narungga People in 2023.[1] Link-Up (Qld) discovered that a few of my Aboriginal ancestors were born in other places, but they came to live on Narungga land, and there they raised families with the Narungga mob.

My grandfather Timothy Newchurch is a descendent of Nellie Raminjemmermin, an historically-documented Kurna woman.[2] My grandmother's mother, Jessie Johnson, was an Adnyamathanha woman of the Flinders Rangers. Her story appears in the SBS episode, *Who Do You Think You Are* in connection with Adam Goodes (AFL player and 2014 Australian of the Year). [3] Jessie came to live at Point Pearce where she married Narungga man Edward Sansbury.

Not long after I contacted Link-Up (Qld) in 2018, I discovered through an Ancestry.com DNA test, a previously unknown maternal brother. Named after my great-grandfather Richard Newchurch, he had been adopted out as a newborn in Sydney. His birth date does not match the timing of the missing sister. We have stayed connected ever since. Unfortunately, due to health reasons, Richard was unable to join us for the Link-Up (Qld) reunion. DNA testing has brought to me a few messages from relatives who were separated from their families as children, now desperately seeking to discover information and to reconnect with their mob. I sincerely hope my experience with Link-Up (Qld) gives hope to people, no matter how old they are, or how long they have been separated, to reconnect with their mob.

My family search with Link-Up (Qld) had a special and unexpected ending. This hardworking, capable, and devoted organisation, in addition to providing a wealth of family records, also organised a family reunion. The timing couldn't have been more perfect. The COVID-19 pandemic had slowed down the processing of my case as Link-Up (Qld) staff were restricted greatly, or my case would have been concluded a few years ago! But in the meantime, my granddaughter Tyliisa Elisara wrote a very special children's story. It is set in Kangaroo Island, known to Aboriginal people as Karta Pintingga. It was an unexpected bringing together of the ancestors and the younger generations. We felt called by our ancestors to bring attention to their story.

My Kurna ancestor, Nellie Raminyemmermin, was taken to Kangaroo Island to work for the sealers who converged there in the 1820s. She became the partner of a sealer from Finland who made the island his home and they had nine children together. One of those, Elizabeth, went to live on the Yorke Peninsula, Narungga Country, where her daughter Edith married Richard Newchurch, my great-grandfather. Although Link-Up (Qld) was unable to locate my missing sister, at my request, Link-Up (Qld) organised the reunion for myself and my granddaughter Tyliisa, on Karta Pintingga, Kangaroo Island.

In 2024, my granddaughter Tyliisa had her first book published, *Wurrtoo: the Wombat Who Fell in Love With The Sky*.^[4] The story begins in Karta Pintingga, travels to Narungga Country, and back to Karta Pintingga. What amazing timing and a perfect climax to my relationship with Link-Up (Qld). *Wurrtoo's* story is receiving wonderful reviews and the reunion journey to Kangaroo Island solidly connected my granddaughter to my ancestral grandmother Nellie Raminyemmermin. We sincerely hope *Wurrtoo* brings attention to Nellie's story and ancestral Country and her many living descendants. We hope to tell her story all over the world.

The work of Link-Up (Qld) is truly relevant, and I hope the reputation of the magnificent work they do is spread everywhere, so they can continue to reconnect people to their mob. We were immensely proud to share in the history of my ancestor Nellie Raminyemmermin with Link-Up (Qld) staff members Tahj Minniecon and Kerry Sandow who accompanied us to Karta Pintingga. They took great care of us during the reunion, we felt loved, and our culture respected. The island's scenery was breathtaking, and we all expressed an enthusiastic desire to return to this beautiful and spiritual place.

Here is a photo of Nellie Raminyemmermin, Kurna woman, my ancestor.



[1] Narungga Nation receive Native Title determination, cultural loss compensation, March 14, 2023, National Indigenous Times

<https://nit.com.au/15-03-2023/5259/narungga-nation-receive-native-title-determination-cultural-loss-compensation>

[2] Nellie Raminyemmermin: A Link To The Past

<https://www.experienceadelaide.com.au/notable-locations/nellie-raminyemmermin-a-link-to-the-past/>

[3] Who Do You Think You Are: Australia, Episode 6, Adam Goodes, 2014. (Both the Adam Goodes SBS episode and Australian of the Year were 2014)

<https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/tv-series/who-do-you-think-you-are/season-6/who-do-you-think-you-are-s6-ep6/313380419793>

[4] *Wurrtoo: The Wombat Who Fell In Love With The Sky*, by Tyliisa Elisara (2024)

<https://www.hachette.com.au/tyliisa-elisara-dylan-finney/wurrtoo-the-wombat-who-fell-in-love-with-the-sky>

Jennifer Chantrell on her reunion journey to Kangaroo Island with Link-Up (Qld) staff Tahj Minniecon and Kerry Sandow.



Doing it for Sam

Marie Gilliland's path to becoming a Link-Up (Qld) Board Director is a heart-warming story of reconnection and the unwavering dedication of those who seek to mend the wounds of the past.

In 2014, while grocery shopping, Marie bumped into a lady who introduced her to Link-Up (Qld). This marked the beginning of a journey that would uncover deep family ties and bring newfound connections. "It's just by chance I bumped into a lady in Coles and she told me about all the amazing work Link-Up (Qld) do," Marie recalls. "I got in touch, and they've found so much information for me."

Marie's discovery that she was related to the late Sam Watson, former Chairperson of Link-Up (Qld), was just one of the many extraordinary revelations. "We found brothers and sisters of my mother, we're going to meet a couple of cousins next week," she shares with a sense of amazement. Through Link-Up (Qld), Marie has been able to reconnect with numerous family members, including her mother's sister in Sydney and cousins she never knew existed.

When the opportunity arose to become a Board Director of Link-Up (Qld), Marie's initial reaction was one of hesitation.

"No, no, no," she admits. However, a heartfelt conversation with Link-Up (Qld) CEO Pat Thompson AM, and the memory of her cousin Sam inspired her to take on the role. "I said okay, I'll do it for Sam," she says, reflecting on the moment she decided to honour her cousin's legacy.

Marie's decision to join the organisation's Board of Directors has been life changing.

"It's the best decision of my life. I've become a lot closer with the Link-Up family, and I just love Link-Up (Qld). I don't know where I'd be without them."

Below: Link-Up (Qld) Board Director Marie Gilliland (left) and sister Loretta (right) reuniting with one of their long-lost cousins.



“The Link-Up (Qld) team really go above and beyond to support every client. That’s what makes me so proud to be a Board Director.”

Below: Link-Up (Qld) Board Director Marie Gilliland with her newfound nieces.

Marie encourages anyone considering reaching out to Link-Up (Qld) to take that step. "100% reach out," she urges. "If you need to find family and reconnect with culture, go. It's probably the only way you can do it with so much support."

Marie’s story, filled with moments of joy, discovery, sadness and reconnection, exemplifies the impact that dedicated and compassionate support can have on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by forced removal. Marie wants her story to act as encouragement to all Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants to reach out and seek the support they deserve. Link-Up (Qld) stands ready to assist, providing compassionate, professional services to help reconnect with family, Country, and culture.

As Marie’s journey shows, the path to reconnection is filled with hope and extraordinary discoveries. "I don’t know where I’d be without Link-Up (Qld)," she says. "They’ve given me a family I never knew I had, and for that, I am eternally grateful."

For more information on how Link-Up (Qld) can support you in your journey, browse our website or get in touch with our friendly team via phone or email.



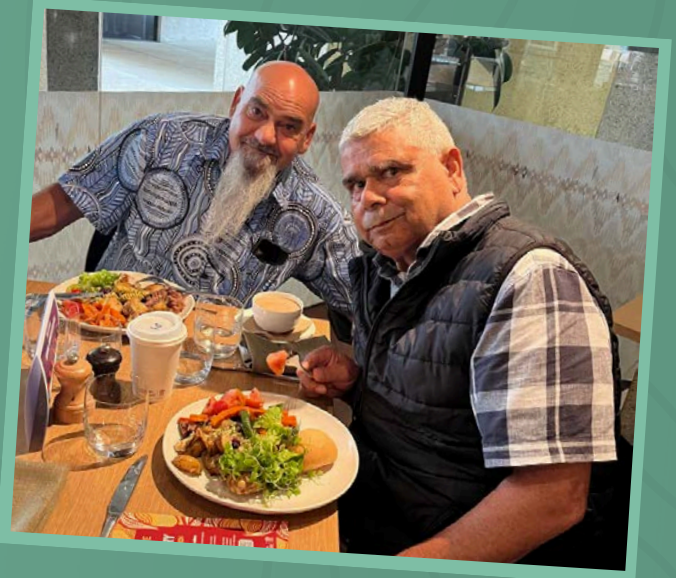
National Reconciliation Week at QPAC

The Link-Up (Qld) team were invited to the Queensland Performing Arts Centre to celebrate National Reconciliation Week in May.

This year's theme for National Reconciliation Week was "Now More Than Ever".

The event was a great opportunity to connect with like-minded people and organisations committed to improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Thank you to Hannah and the team at QPAC for inviting us along!



You're invited...



LINK-UP (QLD)

40TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER

6pm Thursday 28 November 2024

Brisbane City Hall

Join us as we celebrate four decades of supporting Stolen Generations survivors and descendants.

This is an alcohol-free event.

For more information and to book your tickets, visit www.link-upqld.org.au/40years or call 1800 200 855.

Link-Up (Qld)'s 40th Anniversary Gala Dinner is proudly sponsored by:



Finding Tilly

Alfred Joyce's Reunion Story

My name is Alfred Joyce, and I would like to share my emotional but fulfilling journey. I was born on the 27th of October in 1947 to John and Eunice Joyce at the District Hospital Innisfail.

My family and I had attempted to seek any connections or family to my Maternal Grandmother Tilly Bell. I had spoken to my family by the surname of Bell but had not heard back from them with anything. By not hearing back, it led me to Link-Up (Qld) where I became a client in June 2018 for some assistance to finding any information on my Maternal Grandmother Tilly Bell, whether it was any unknown relatives of my grandmother, visiting my grandmother's birthplace or finding and visiting my grandmother's gravesite.

Link-Up (Qld) staff have been outstanding in their work ethic and provided me with wonderful support throughout my journey. It was in May 2021 when my research had been completed. After having my research delivered to me and discussions with my family and Link-Up (Qld) staff Heidi O'Donoghue and Sharona Joinbee, we decided to go ahead with planning a reunion at the gravesite of my Maternal Grandmother Tilly Bell at Richmond Qld. Due to some medical reasons throughout 2022 and 2023, I had to hold off on my reunion to Richmond. During the hold off, Heidi contacted Richmond Council to obtain my grandmother's plot number at the Old Richmond Cemetery.



Alfred Joyce and family visiting the gravesite of his grandmother, Tilly Bell, at Richmond, Queensland.

After overcoming my medical conditions - during which, Link-Up (Qld) staff remained in contact and checked on my well-being throughout it all - Joshua Thompson and Jack Webster from Link-Up (Qld) had contacted me to enquire if I would still like to continue through with my reunion to Richmond Qld. After having a discussion with my children, we decided on a date and gave the go-ahead to start planning the reunion for the end of June 2024.

While Link-Up (Qld) were planning my reunion to Richmond, I contacted Richmond Council to obtain information on what my family and I were able to do to my grandmother's gravesite as we were planning on taking a plaque out to place on her gravesite. The Richmond Council advised me that they were able to organise making the plaque and the installation of it on my grandmother's grave before we arrived in Richmond, which my children and I agreed on.

Leading up to my reunion, I was informed of how Link-Up (Qld) were able to support my family and I on the reunion. I was very pleased with the support information that had been shared with me and got into contact with my children to notify them.

When everything had been finalised, we were set to travel out to Richmond to visit my grandmother Tilly Bell's resting place. I was very eager to travel out to see my grandmother Tilly Bell's gravesite accompanied by my children Megan, Jennifer, Carmel, Karen and Alfred Jr.



Above: Alfred Joyce on his reunion journey with family members.



When we arrived in Richmond Qld on Friday 28th June, we were met by both Jack and Joshua at the Midway Motel who had arrived a few hours earlier. We all sat down and had a yarn about our travels out to Richmond and got to know each other a bit more then decided to get some rest and meet in the morning to discuss plans for the next day.

On Saturday morning, we all met outside my room where we were going through old family photos, trying to decide on what one we could leave on the grave. After a brief discussion, we decided to head to the Old Richmond Cemetery. On arrival, we headed straight towards my Grandmother Tilly Bell's gravesite. I felt overwhelmed and in good spirits that I was able to visit my grandmother's resting place alongside my children, where we cleaned her plaque and placed flowers around her resting place. It is a moment in my life that I will cherish forever, knowing that my family and I can now visit her and know where she is resting.

“It is a moment in my life that I will cherish forever, knowing that my family and I can now visit her and know where she is resting.”

After a few words and some photos, we then decided to head back to the motel to debrief with for some refreshments and lunch along with a rest afterwards.

That Saturday night, we all met for dinner at the Mud Hut Hotel. Plenty of laughs and stories were shared as we enjoyed our beautiful dinner. We thanked the Link-Up (Qld) staff for such amazing support and compassion they had provided my family and I on our journey and reunion.

Waking up to our last full day of the reunion, the group thought it would be nice to take a drive to Julia Creek, which was just over an hour from Richmond for some sightseeing and to look for any significant sights around the area. We enjoyed the travels and country out to Julia Creek. We then grabbed a bite to eat and returned to Richmond. After a long day everyone had decided to enjoy an early dinner and say our goodbyes as we were departing early in the morning.

My family and I said our thank you and acknowledged the Link-Up (Qld) staff for assisting us with finding my grandmother's resting place as well as getting us out to Richmond for the reunion. We enjoyed Jack and Joshua's company as they were exceptional with what they provided us on our journey along with plenty of laughs.

I would personally like to say thanks to Link-Up (Qld) staff for their professionalism in helping me and my family in tracing my Grandmother Tilly Pedro (Bell) life's journey, which bought us to the reunion at the Richmond cemetery end of last month.

My journey to this point has been long, but until I can find out if Tilly Bell has any family out there or which part of this country she comes from, there will always be that missing link.

Perhaps my grandmother has no other family out there, but someone may know of the Bell family from Mackay. I can only hope that someone somewhere will read our story, and something may jog their memory.

Tilly Bell, born in the Mackay area in 1908, was sent to Palm Island in 1918. There are no records about Tilly's parents, however her death certificate quotes Sambo Bell as her father. If anyone has any information, no matter how small, please contact Link-Up (Qld). Any information will be greatly appreciated.



Dancing through adversity

Patricia Morris Banjo, a proud Okola Kunji, Lama Lama woman, is a shining example of resilience and cultural pride. Her journey, marked by determination and unwavering commitment, has touched the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Patricia and her friend Priscilla co-founded the Deaf Indigenous Dance Group in 1997 with a simple but profound goal: to celebrate and preserve their rich cultural heritage. What started as a small, passionate effort in Cairns has grown into a vibrant and thriving group that has been bringing people together for over 25 years.

Growing up with different forms of sign language and facing social and educational challenges, Patricia was determined to find her voice and place in the world. Her experiences of trauma and grief, shared by many in her community, fuelled her passion for cultural preservation and community empowerment. Through her leadership in the Deaf Indigenous Dance Group, Patricia has created a safe and empowering space for others to heal, celebrate their identities, and find strength in their shared experiences.

“I meet so many different deaf people and I see they've also suffered...

That's the motivation for us getting together...

You've just got to keep going forward...”

Link-Up (Qld) was delighted to invite Patricia and the Deaf Indigenous Dance Group to participate in its 2024 Sorry Day breakfast event in West End earlier this year. In her presentation, Patricia encouraged everyone to keep moving forward, embrace our cultural identities, and work together towards a brighter future.

Patricia's journey serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring spirit and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Her story invites us to celebrate and support the rich cultural heritage of our communities, ensuring that every individual can thrive and find their place in the world.

Patricia Morris Banjo performing at Link-Up (Qld)'s 2024 Sorry Day event in West End, Brisbane.
(PHOTO: FARLEY WARD/SHUTTERSTORM PHOTOGRAPHY)

From the heart of Cape York to the islands of Torres Strait, the group's influence has spread across Australia. Their journey wasn't easy—there was no outside help, just the steadfast support of local communities and Patricia's relentless spirit. Every step was a testament to their dedication, and over time, they created something truly special.

Patricia's personal story is as powerful as it is moving. As a member of the Stolen Generations, she experienced the deep pain of being separated from her biological mother at a young age. Navigating her mixed heritage—her mother being Aboriginal and her father white—shaped her unique perspective and spiritual resilience. Her father, a supportive figure, taught her the importance of embracing and respecting both sides of her heritage.



Above: Patricia Morris Banjo performing with the Deaf Indigenous Dance Group
(PHOTO: FARLEY WARD/SHUTTERSTORM PHOTOGRAPHY)



Reuniting with Dad

Sandra Brady Fletcher recounts the special day she met her father, John Brady Sr.

Image: Sandra Brady Fletcher (second from right) reuniting with her father John Brady Sr (right) and his family at Brisbane Airport in 1998.

In the late 1990s, Sandra Brady Fletcher embarked on a journey to find her father, John Patrick Brady Sr, after nearly 30 years apart. Her story of determination and reunion is especially poignant following John's passing earlier this year.

Born in Brisbane in 1968, Sandra was just eight months old when her grandparents moved the family to South Australia, taking her, her mother Thora Turner, and her uncles with them. That was the last time her father saw her until she turned 30.

By the early 90s, Sandra was living in the United Kingdom, far from the father she had never known. "In 1992, I tried to find my father but had no success," Sandra recalls. "It wasn't until February 1998 that things started to happen."

In June 1998, Sandra learned her father had been located, but details were scarce, and she had to wait for him to contact her. Despite this, she booked a flight back to Australia, determined to find him.

A week before her departure, Sandra received a call from Troy Brady, who introduced himself as her brother. "At first, I couldn't believe it," Sandra said. "But he answered all my questions, and I realised I was finally in contact with my siblings in Australia."

Around her 30th birthday, Sandra returned to Australia. As she descended the escalator at Brisbane Airport, she noticed an Aboriginal man going up, a moment she still remembers clearly.

At the baggage claim area, a woman from Link-Up (Qld) approached Sandra. "She introduced herself as a representative from Link-Up," Sandra explained. "I believe my father had reached out to them, which is why she was there to greet me with my family."

Sandra's reunion with her father and siblings closed years of searching and wondering. Reflecting on it now, after her father's passing, those moments of reconnection feel even more significant.

"I hope my story gives hope to others searching for family," Sandra said. "No matter how long it takes, there's always a chance."

A black and white close-up portrait of an elderly man, John Brady Snr. He has a serious expression and is looking directly at the camera. His face is wrinkled, and he has a receding hairline. He is wearing a dark jacket with a patch on the left shoulder that reads "HARVEY MACKAY RUGBY LEAGUE ALL STARS".

Vale John Brady Snr

04.09.1949 - 01.05.2024

John Patrick Brady, born on 4th September 1949 in Proserpine, Queensland, to Patrick Brady, a Gudjala & KuKu Yalanji man, and Ethel Solomon, a Gia woman, passed away on 1st May 2024.

John's life was a testament to resilience, family, and community.

John Patrick Brady's early years were marked by hardship. Living in the mountains of North Gregory, away from the main town of Proserpine, the family faced constant fear of being taken to a mission. Despite these challenges, John cherished his childhood memories, including being saved by his father's quick thinking after a snake bite at the age of three. His strong bond with his great-grandmother Cora Emmerson, the family's matriarch, was a cornerstone of his upbringing.

John's teenage years brought significant changes. After his mother was diagnosed with leukaemia, the family moved to Brisbane for her treatment.

This transition from a small town to the big city was daunting, and John and his siblings were placed in the Nudgee Orphanage while their father worked. At thirteen, John left school to support his family, never facing unemployment thereafter. He worked various jobs, including at

Coopers Plains Wreckers and General Motors Holden, saving enough to buy his first car, a 1967 Holden HR, which gave him the freedom to travel and work along the Queensland coast.

John's family life began in earnest in 1968 with the birth of his first daughter, Sandra. At eight months old, Sandra relocated to South Australia with her Mother, and later moved to the United Kingdom.

Thirty years later, with the support of the Salvation Army and Link-Up (Qld), John was able to reconnect with Sandra, who had travelled to Brisbane to find her father. You can read more about this special moment on the page 16, as Sandra recounts her experience.

John's second daughter Tracey, was born in 1973. In 1972, John met Katherine Fisher, the love of his life, at Open Doors, a Murri dance event. Their relationship blossomed, leading to the birth of several children, including Jackie, John Jnr, Troy, Peita, Toni, Shaun, Bobbie-Jo and Darren.





The family settled in Inala, where John worked for the Brisbane City Council and played for the Kangaroos rugby league team, earning a place in the Indigenous All Blacks team for a tour in New Zealand.

John Brady's legacy extends beyond his family and community contributions. As a talented rugby league player, he was part of the first national Indigenous team to tour New Zealand in 1973. This historic tour, which marked a significant milestone for Indigenous rugby league, saw John play as a centre, showcasing his skills and

dedication to the sport. The team played nine games in ten days, winning seven and leaving a lasting impression on their hosts and paving the way for future Indigenous teams.

John and Kathy eventually married in 1991 after 18 years living together, continuing to build a life full of love and community spirit. Their home in Inala was always open to friends and family, reflecting John's generous and welcoming nature. Known for his love of TAB, karaoke, footy, darts, and spending time with his loved ones, John never smoked or drank, maintaining a promise he made to himself after a childhood hangover experience.

John's life was celebrated in a service held on 10th May 2024 at Citipointe Church West, Durack. His legacy is carried forward by his wife Kathy, their children, and numerous grandchildren, each holding dear the memories of a man who lived fully and loved deeply.

Rest in peace, John Patrick Brady. Your spirit, strength, and unwavering love for your family and community will forever be remembered.



Uncovering Kamilaroi:

Patrick Riggs' Reunion Story

Patrick Riggs' life has been marked by frequent travels and diverse experiences. Growing up in a family with four children and a pet kangaroo, Patrick spent his childhood moving between locations. His mother, along with her boyfriend Jimmy, took the family on various trips, including a brief stay in Cardwell, Queensland, before returning to Sydney. Living across from his grandmother's place, Patrick took on his first job in Year 4, working weekends for thirty bob per week. Fifteen years ago, he relocated to the Sunshine Coast to be closer to his daughter.

As a young man, Patrick discovered an old photo of his father, sparking a deep curiosity and a feeling that he might be of Aboriginal descent, though no one had ever confirmed it.

Patrick's journey took a significant turn when he first encountered Link-Up (Qld) while in hospital. A young hospital worker introduced him to the organisation and its services. Intrigued and feeling a deep-seated intuition about his Aboriginal heritage, Patrick reached out to Link-Up (Qld). This initial contact led to an intake appointment, which he attended with his daughter.



Above: Patrick Riggs returned to Kamilaroi country with his son William.

Reflecting on this pivotal moment, Patrick shared, "I just had this feeling that I might be Aboriginal, so I contacted Link-Up (Qld), and they invited me for an intake appointment. My daughter came with me, and that marked the beginning of this significant journey."

As the day of his 'Back to Country' reunion in Mungindi, Queensland approached, Patrick experienced a mix of emotions. Confusion and uncertainty loomed large, as he didn't know what to expect or how to react. With his son William by his side for support, Patrick travelled to Kamilaroi country for the reunion. His primary aim was to uncover details about his father and understand how he ended up in Sydney.

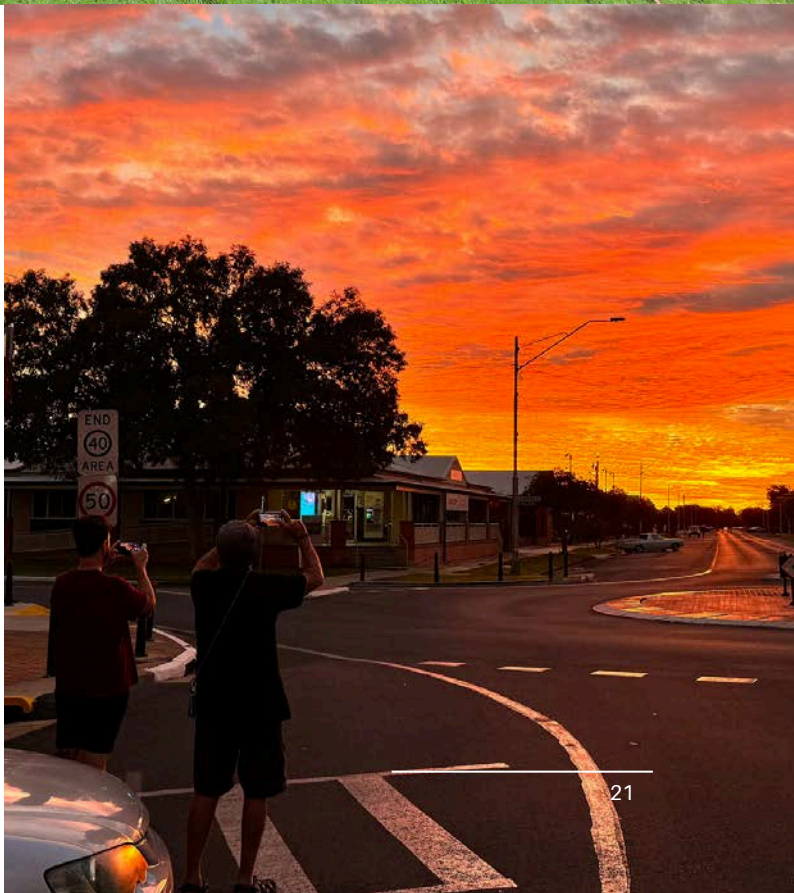
The reunion was a moving experience for Patrick.



Although it provided some clarity, he was left with lingering questions about his father's journey and reasons for moving to Sydney. "I had many questions," Patrick explained, "and it was to find out information about my father and how he ended up in Sydney—all the unknowns about my own history."

The reunion stirred a desire in Patrick to reconnect further with his roots. He hopes to return to Mungindi in the future, this time on his motorbike and accompanied by his best friend.

"I would like to thank everyone at Link-Up (Qld) - all the research and support staff - for their support and assistance throughout this journey."



Home of Healing

The Gindaja Story

Nestled in the serene coastal community of Yarrabah on the traditional lands of the Gunggandji peoples, the Gindaja Treatment and Healing Indigenous Corporation is more than just a rehabilitation service; it's a source of hope and renewal for individuals struggling with alcohol and substance dependencies. This community-driven organisation is dedicated to healing the wounds of addiction through culturally rooted practices and fostering a deep sense of community belonging.

Gindaja's journey has been marked by its unwavering commitment to improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Far North Queensland and beyond. By integrating traditional healing practices with modern therapeutic approaches, Gindaja has become a sanctuary for those seeking to overcome the grip of substance abuse.

The name 'Gindaja' is Gunggandji language for the Cassowary – a strong, proud bird, that has inhabited our traditional lands for millennia and who plants the seeds for the rainforest to grow and regenerate. In the same way, Gindaja seeks to plant the seeds of hope, inner strength and healing for all clients who come to them with a broken spirit because of alcohol and drug dependency.

This vision led to the opening of the Gindaja Learning and Wellbeing Centre earlier this year, a \$1.7 million facility designed for early intervention and culturally appropriate services including case management, health education and promotion, and Yarrabah's own "Warrior Men's Support Program". The centre stands as a testament to the power of community and government collaboration, with the Queensland State Government providing substantial funding through its Community Infrastructure Investment Partnership (CIIP).

Replacing an old demountable office that operated for 13 years, the new facility offers a purpose-built space that meets the unique needs of the community. In addition to the Learning and Wellbeing Centre, Gindaja operates a Residential Recovery Centre that provides comprehensive rehabilitation services, including accommodation for those undergoing treatment, as well as a justice service to support individuals appearing before the Yarrabah Magistrates Court throughout the justice process.

Gindaja's holistic model of person-centred care is the only community controlled, specialist Alcohol and Drug residential service in the FNQ region.



Ailsa Lively, Gindaja's passionate CEO, has played a pivotal role in the organisation's success. Her dedication to creating healing spaces that respect and incorporate Indigenous cultural practices has been instrumental in the centre's development. Under her leadership and a board of directors all of whom are local to Yarrabah, Gindaja has flourished, becoming a trusted place for support and recovery.

Looking ahead, the organisation aims to continue expanding its reach, offering more programmes and services to support the wider community. Construction is currently underway at the Residential Recovery Centre to expand client accommodation and training facilities. With a strong foundation of over 40 years in operation and a clear vision, Gindaja is poised to make an even greater impact in the years to come.

For more information, visit gindaja.org.au.



Left: Gindaja CEO, Ailsa Lively

Below: Gindaja's Residential Recovery Centre in Yarrabah, which is currently undergoing an expansion to enhance its services and accommodate more clients.



Link-Up (Qld) Board visits Far North Queensland

In June, the Link-Up (Qld) Board of Directors traveled to Far North Queensland, seizing the opportunity to connect with local communities and witness the impactful work being done for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The journey began with a visit to the Gindaja Treatment & Healing Indigenous Corporation in Yarrabah, where the board celebrated the opening of the Learning & Wellbeing Centre. The board then delved into the rich Mandingalbay Yidinji culture and history, guided by the young women of Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours.

The board also met with our dedicated Cairns staff, who were busy moving into their new office in Woree. Continuing their journey along the Barron River to the Atherton Tablelands, the board met with locals in and around Mareeba. This included a visit to the Mulungu Aboriginal Corporation Primary Health Care Service, where they learned about the vital health services provided to the community.

Board Director Paul Sandow emphasised the importance of the visit:
“This trip has been a great opportunity to meet some of the communities our organisation service and yarn with them on their country.”

Link-Up (Qld) extends its gratitude to everyone who welcomed them and looks forward to future visits.



National Redress Scheme

For people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse

FREE SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS IN PRISON

Free and confidential support services are available to help you.

To find out how you can access the following support services, contact the Scheme by:

- using the Common Auto Dial List number on the gaol phone
- calling the Scheme on 1800 737 377 (8am-5pm Monday to Friday)
- Writing to the Scheme:
NRS
Reply Paid 7750
Canberra BC ACT 2610

Redress Support Services can:

- help you understand the Scheme
- help you decide if you want to apply
- support you when you apply
- support you after you apply
- provide emotional support.

Virtual and telephone support is available. Some Redress Support Services offer in-person support.

knowmore Legal Service can:

- help you understand your legal options
- provide free legal and financial counselling
- help if you are getting a redress payment.

My journey home

Marim Brown's Reunion Story

My name is Marim Brown, I am 49 years of age. I am Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. I have six beautiful children and have been blessed with six grandchildren. I am originally from Mackay. I was born in Mackay Base Hospital in 1974. My mother and I resided in Mackay for many years. I went to school at Slade Point State School. Soon after high school, I had the privilege and blessing of starting my little family.

Friends and family are where I heard about Link-Up (Qld). When residing in Townsville in 2012, I became interested when hearing the work that Link-Up (Qld) does and how they helped other people go back to Country and I wanted to connect with them to find out about my family connection to my country. My family is my main priority in life, they are my next line of generation. They've also been interested in where our bloodline started and still today have many questions and interests in our ancestors.

I was anxious leading up to the day that we returned to country. On the day of the reunion, I was flooded with thoughts and questions about my Uncle Rex Frank and how he passed. I had many mixed emotions following up to the day as well.

Marim Brown on her 'Back to Country' reunion trip.



Heidi and Kerry supported me throughout my journey going back home to country.

Going back to Country, I hoped to find out where we were from New Mapoon. Also, being able to see my late Uncle Rex Frank's graveside because the family did not know where he was buried. When going to back to country, to my surprise, we found him. My heart was filled with joy, I had so many emotions locating my uncle.

For many years, my family (especially my mother) often wondered where her little brother's grave was. Going back to Country (New Mapoon), I was then reunited with my late Uncle Rex Frank's grave site. I was filled with mixed emotions knowing where my Uncle is buried. If I didn't connect with Link-Up (Qld), I would not know where he was buried. I am very happy and pleased to say that my uncle is located and now my family can visit him.



Above: Marim Brown on her 'Back to Country' reunion trip at New Mapoon in Far North Queensland.



Harry Brown at "New Mapoon" or Hidden Valley, 1974. In 1963, he rode up to his father's house at Mapoon with a shot-gun and prevented the police burning it down.

I plan on going back to where my Great Grandfather Harry and Great Grandmother Daisy originated from and to be on country where my mother and her siblings lived. Now I can take my family back and be proud to say we are from New Mapoon, revisit locations where my family was raised and lived, and I am so excited I cannot wait to reconnect to country/land.

I would like to give a huge thank you to Link-Up (Qld) for their support throughout my back to country journey. Meeting Link-Up (Qld) staff members, Heidi and Kerry, has been a blessing.



Sailing with the Spirits

Discover the magic of Saltwater Eco Tours

When Simon Thornalley gazed out over the shimmering waters of Mooloolaba, he saw more than just the ocean's vast expanse. He saw a canvas for sharing the rich tapestry of his Indigenous heritage. This vision gave birth to Saltwater Eco Tours, an Indigenous-owned business that has quickly become a leader of cultural cruises on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

Simon's journey to founding Saltwater Eco Tours is as inspiring as the tours themselves. With a deep connection to the ocean and his Indigenous roots,

Simon set out to create an experience that would offer more than just a scenic boat ride. He wanted to provide a meaningful journey that celebrates the traditions, stories, and environmental stewardship of the Kabi Kabi and Jinibara people.

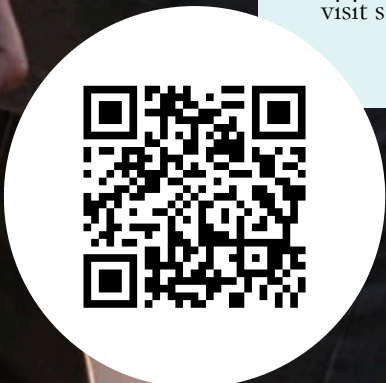
Stepping aboard the beautifully restored, heritage-listed 'Spray of the Coral Coast' is the beginning of an unforgettable adventure. The journey is a blend of stunning natural beauty and cultural heritage, enriched by bushtucker-inspired cuisine, where you can taste the unique flavours of native ingredients prepared with modern culinary techniques. From the zesty flavours of finger lime to the earthy richness of wattle seed, this culinary journey not only delights the palate but also educates about the traditional uses of these ingredients and their significance in Indigenous culture.



Under Simon's leadership, Saltwater Eco Tours is committed to environmental preservation. The team practices eco-friendly methods, from minimising waste to educating guests about marine conservation. Their efforts ensure that the pristine beauty of the Sunshine Coast remains unspoiled for future generations.

Whether you're a local or a visitor, Saltwater Eco Tours offers an extraordinary way to explore the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage. Each voyage is a step into a world where the past and present meet upon the tranquil waterways of the Mooloolah River.

To book your experience or learn more about Saltwater Eco Tours' offerings, visit saltwaterecotours.com.au.





Guiding home & giving back.

Above: Tahj Minniecon (right) supporting Link-Up (Qld) clients.

After spending over a decade as a professional footballer, Tahj Minniecon decided to give back to the community that had supported him. His diverse cultural background, including Aboriginal, South Sea Islander, Torres Strait, and Malaysian heritage, gives him a strong sense of identity and purpose.

“When I was playing football, I always knew I wanted to give back to the community, especially the Aboriginal community,” Tahj shares. “Both my parents are Aboriginal, and I grew up with a strong sense of identity. After my football career, I found myself at Link-Up (Qld) and fell in love with the work they do. It’s amazing and so important.”

Link-Up (Qld) offers reunification services and support to Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants, helping them reconnect with their family, Country and culture. As a Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellor, based out of Link-Up (Qld)’s Brisbane office, Tahj sees firsthand the organisation’s positive impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Queensland.

“There’s so much trauma within the Indigenous community from the Stolen Generations. Being able to give people a sense of identity and reuniting them with something they’ve lost is incredibly rewarding,” he explains. “A lot of the time, our clients describe it as filling an empty void.”

In his role, Tahj supports clients throughout their journey, providing emotional guidance and cultural insights. His dedication is clear when he recalls his first reunion, an emotional experience that he’ll never forget.

Within weeks of joining Link-Up (Qld), Tahj accompanied a client to her ancestral land in Emerald, where they found her great-grandfather’s

grave. This reunion had a lasting impact on both Tahj and the client.

“I’ll never forget that first reunion,” Tahj recalls. “The emotions were intense. We took a lady back to her country and reunited her with her great-grandfather’s grave. The joy and happiness she felt was overwhelming. It was a powerful reminder of why our work is so important.”

Tahj’s empathy and commitment shine through in every interaction. His approach is one of genuine care, ensuring that clients feel supported and understood throughout their reunification journey. “It’s our duty to help clients emotionally along the way. We’re there to support them, whether they need to talk about culture or just have a yarn.”

For those considering Link-Up (Qld)’s services, Tahj says “take the jump”.

“It’s a scary thought, but once you’re in it, there’s no better feeling.”

Link-Up (Qld) stands as a powerful example of reconnection and healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Through the compassionate efforts of researchers and support staff like Tahj, the team continues to transform lives, one reunion at a time. For Stolen Generations survivors, Link-Up (Qld) offers not just a service, but a chance to rediscover their sense of belonging.

To learn more about our services, browse our website or contact our friendly team.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Link-Up (Qld) is a free service.
- We offer support before, during and after your family reunion.
- We respect your privacy and treat all information confidentially.
- We run a range of healing activities, camps, support groups, art, craft and music workshops.
- We offer cultural renewal activities and support return to country.



Scan here to learn more!



PANTHERS AND SISTAS CONQUER BADU

From 14-16 June, Badu Island became the vibrant heart of the Torres Strait as it hosted the 2024 Island of Origin Carnival. This annual event, which began in 1985, brought together communities from surrounding islands, Cape York and beyond, with people travelling by car, plane, and boat to join in on the action.

The Paga Panthers of Boigu Island, featuring former NRL star Ben Barba and Link-Up (Qld) caseworker Jack Webster, emerged as the champions in the men's division. After a shaky start in the early rounds, the Panthers clawed their way back, culminating in a commanding 36-12 victory over the Cape Stallions in the grand final.

In the women's division, NQ Sistas United showcased their dominance from start to finish. Their flawless performance throughout the carnival included a decisive 16-6 win over the Arkai Sisters in the final. Key players like Calista Boyd (Golden Boot winner) and Maiama Hull (Best Forward winner) were instrumental in their success.

"Island of Origin isn't just a competition. It's about celebrating our culture, our shared love of footy, and strengthening community bonds across Far North Queensland. At Link-Up (Qld), we strive to support the healing of our people, and events like this play an important role in that," said Jack Webster, Link-Up (Qld) Caseworker and Paga Panthers player.

Congratulations to all the teams and individuals who made this year's event truly unforgettable.



Above: Jack Webster (right) holding the competition trophy with a Paga Panthers teammate.

Below: NQ Sistas took out the Womens Division at Island of Origin 2024 on Badu Island



Virginia's Trek for Rights

Earlier this year, thousands of kilometres away from her home in Brisbane, Link-Up (Qld) Counsellor Virginia Clarke embarked on an inspiring journey through Australia's red centre. The 'Trek for Rights 2024' fundraising campaign by UN Women Australia saw her tackling the challenging Larapinta Trail, a gruelling hike across Arrernte country east of Alice Springs (Mparntwe). This trek was more than just a physical challenge; it was a mission to raise vital funds for the UN Women's Second Chance Education program, aimed at empowering marginalised women through education and vocational training.

Virginia's dedication to supporting people facing adversity is evident in her daily work as a Redress Counsellor at Link-Up (Qld), where she supports people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse. This compassion fuelled her determination to complete the trek and raise over \$6,000 for the cause. "I have been a supporter of UN Women for over twenty years and the trek is a great way to combine my two passions - working for women and travelling to beautiful country."

The 50-kilometre, four-day journey was not without its memorable moments. Virginia recalls, "I hadn't realised that I suffered from vertigo, but this trip when we were on small ledges thousands of feet up in the mountain tops was a bit scary. Next time I will do more walking along the riverbanks."

Raising such a significant amount was no small feat, and Virginia feels a profound sense of accomplishment. "It is easy to be overwhelmed when fundraising, but when we all do our bit it becomes easier."

"What impressed me most was the camaraderie of the people on the trek. Everyone was excited to see the red heart of Australia. They were such a clever, compassionate, diverse and passionate group - I kept thinking I was in a version of the book, *Eat, Pray Love!* The opportunity to see the spectacular flowers and ancient landscapes was thrilling. Most of all, my fellow trekkers wanted to meet with the local Aboriginal community; they were hungry for stories. Our guides, although not indigenous, were respectful and full of knowledge about the land that they traverse all year long. There is something very special about the country around Mparntwe."

To those who supported her fundraising efforts, Virginia conveys a heartfelt message: "Your support has been invaluable. It is not just a donation; it's an investment in the future of these women. Together, we are making a difference, and I am profoundly grateful for your generosity."

Scan the QR code if you'd like to support Virginia's fundraising efforts.



Above and below: Link-Up (Qld) Redress Counsellor, Virginia Clarke, walking the Larapinta Trail as part of the 'Trek for Rights 2024' campaign.



2024 National Sorry Day Breakfast

Link-Up (Qld)'s annual Sorry Day breakfast event took place on Friday 24th May 2024, at Orleigh Park, West End, Brisbane.

The event featured a Welcome to Country by Shannon Ruska, musical performances by Rochelle Pitt, the Deaf Indigenous Dance Group, and the Songshine Choir, a keynote address by Ross Andrews, and a wreath-laying and cake-cutting ceremony.

Orleigh Park, once the location of the Aboriginal Girls Home 'Cranbrook House,' served as a poignant backdrop, reminding everyone of the historical significance of the site.

The event was a resounding success, with over 280 people in attendance.

Thank you to everyone who came along, especially our event supporters Micah Projects, the Healing Foundation, Triple A Media, ABC Brisbane and the National Indigenous Radio Service.

PHOTOS BY FARLEY WARD/SHUTTERSTORM PHOTOGRAPHY







Presentation to OPG First Nations Workshop

Ruth Loli, Link-Up (Qld) Research Manager, was invited to present at the first annual First Nations workshop of the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) in April. Ruth was one of nine guest speakers throughout the three-day forum aimed to support the OPG’s cultural journey towards increased capacity and effective engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities.

The OPG services children and young people in out of home care, as well as adults with impaired decision making.

A non-Indigenous woman, Ruth has worked at Link-Up (Qld) for 15 years and was asked to share her insights on the topic of ‘allyship’ and her considerations when working respectfully with people and community to better outcomes for our Stolen Generations.

Ruth spoke to themes of Authenticity, Education, Respect, Accountability and Reciprocity.

In a Q&A panel after presenting, Ruth joined with Kate Connors, Deputy Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney General and Dr Meegan Crawford, Chief Practitioner, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services to engage in audience-led discussions on ‘allyship’.

Questions and dialogue concentrated on how to improve support for children in out of home care to maintain cultural and kin connections, and the adequacy of current services.

It was a pleasure to present at the First Nations workshop and contribute to the OPG’s efforts to reframe the relationship between the public sector and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Link-Up (Qld) Team-Building Workshop

In June, the Link-Up (Qld) team participated in a productive two-day workshop, featuring a number of *Be Challenged* programs which enhanced communication and collaboration through task-based activities. The event also included strategic team-building exercises and a cultural cruise with Saltwater Eco Cruises.

The workshop strengthened team connections whilst reflecting on the year's achievements and challenges, and prepared us for more essential work ahead.





Upcoming Events

See below for a list of upcoming events. For more information, visit our website or call our team on 1800 200 855.

**29 AUGUST
2024**

**CLIENT MORNING TEA SUPPORT
GROUP (BRISBANE)**

[Link-Up Brisbane Office](#)

Call 1800 200 855 for more information.

**26 SEPTEMBER
2024**

**CLIENT MORNING TEA SUPPORT
GROUP (BRISBANE)**

[Link-Up Brisbane Office](#)

Call 1800 200 855 for more information.

**31 OCTOBER
2024**

**CLIENT MORNING TEA SUPPORT
GROUP (BRISBANE)**

[Link-Up Brisbane Office](#)

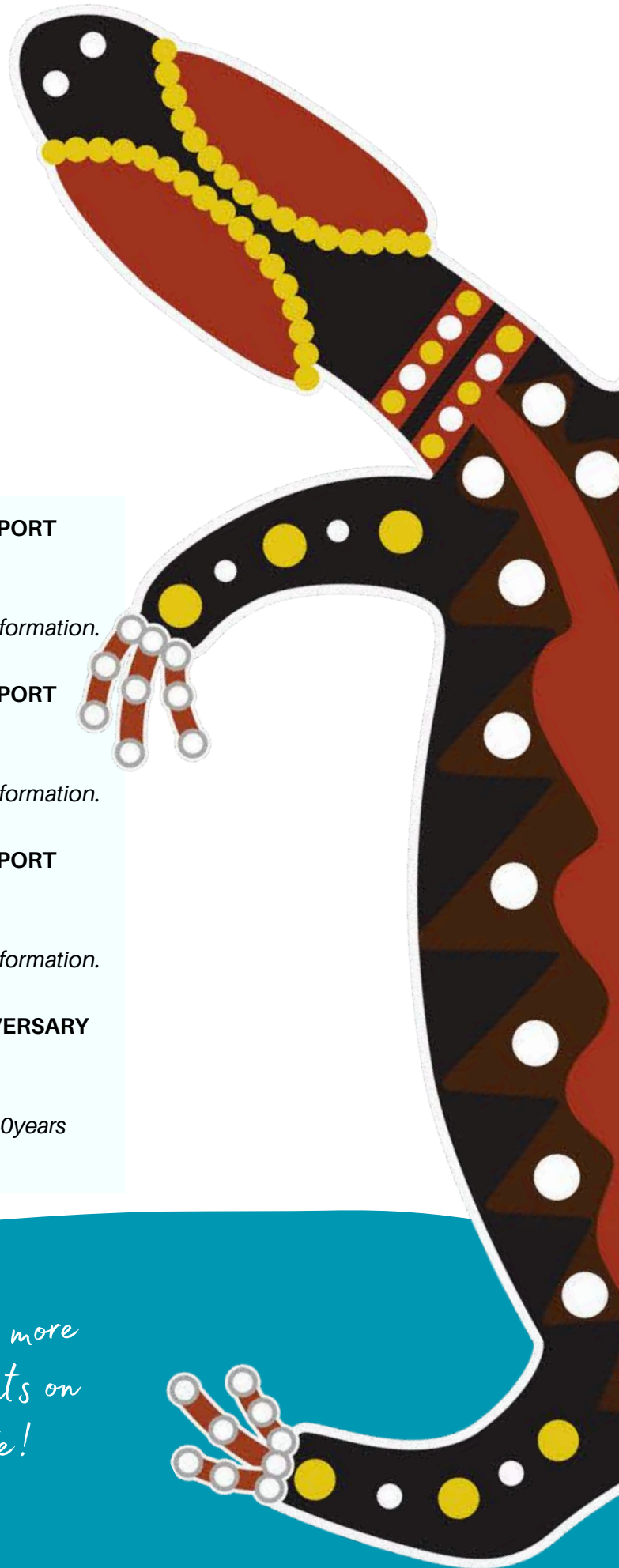
Call 1800 200 855 for more information.

**28 NOVEMBER
2024**

**LINK-UP (QLD) 40TH ANNIVERSARY
GALA DINNER**

[Brisbane City Hall](#)

*Visit www.link-upqld.org.au/40years
for more information.*



*Scan here for more
news and events on
our website!*





Support our work

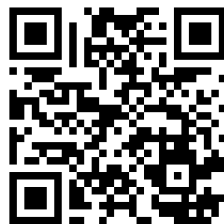
Interested in helping Link-Up (Qld) continue its work?

All donations, large and small, make a difference in supporting our organisation to continue the work we do to help members of the Stolen Generations still searching for their family.

We truly appreciate your generosity.

For more information, visit

link-upqld.org.au/donation



If you or someone you know needs support at any time, please contact the following services.

STOP VIOLENCE

1800 737 732

respect.gov.au

BEYOND BLUE

1300 224 636

beyondblue.org.au

13 YARN

13 92 76

13yarn.org.au

MENSLINE

1300 789 978

mensline.org.au

SUICIDE CALLBACK
SERVICE

1300 659 467

suicidecallbackservice.org.au



Link-Up (Qld)

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
STILL BRINGING THEM HOME



Link-Up (Qld) is funded by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, Department of Social Services, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts and the Healing Foundation.



Australian Government



**Queensland
Government**



HealingFoundation
Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People