

## Working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care through a culturally safe framework



### Candice Butler

#### Child Protection, Qld

Candice Butler is a proud Aboriginal woman with strong family connections to

Yarrabah in Far North Queensland. She is passionate about ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have true self-determination and authority over decisions that are made about their lives, particularly in the area of Child Protection. Candice is a Social Worker with over 15 years' experience working across government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs.

Candice is a thought leader that has been instrumental in the significant reforms that have occurred for Child Protection in Queensland and nationally and is currently the Deputy Chair of SNAICC, the National Peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

As the inaugural Director of the Centre of Excellence at the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Ltd (QATSICPP), Candice has provided significant leadership in the design, delivery, management, and evaluation of projects to improve child and family wellbeing across Queensland. This includes co-authoring research and leading of the evaluation and action research agenda.

At the heart of Candice's work is ensuring that the voice and choice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is heard and respected in child protection reform.



### Debbie Haynes

#### Clinical Psychologist Registrar, NSW

Debbie Haynes is a proud Gamilaraay woman through her maternal ancestry and her paternal family are connected to the Wirangu and Mirning people.

She lives on Darkinyoong Country and works as a Clinical Psychology Registrar within NSW Out of Home Care, healing trauma through bringing culture to the face of western clinical methodologies. Deb's completed clinical psychology masters thesis was titled, "The Effectiveness of Trauma Based Therapies for Aboriginal Children in NSW Out of Home Care".

Debbie is furthering this work with her PhD which will focus on embedding the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) model into Clinical Practice for registered health practitioners. She has worked across a number of different government and non-government roles, private practice, primary health care, disability and neurodiverse organisations.

Her current position aligns with her passion for working with children and families building on the strengths of families, children and communities.



**Lana Draper**  
**Occupational Therapist,  
NSW**

Lana is a proud Ngiyampaa woman of the Stone people through her Father, Rex Draper, and Grandmother, Bubba Murphy. Lana is an Occupational Therapist and is a PhD Candidate with University of Wollongong. Her research project “The role of culture in strengthening social and emotional wellbeing for Aboriginal children and young people in NSW Out of Home Care” is focused on generating knowledge about the ways in which the child protection system can integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture into procedures and practices, and how to promote authentic connection to culture, family, community, and country for improved social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people in statutory care.

Her work in the LINKS Trauma Healing Service aligns with her values of an integrated family approach, connecting to culture for healing and self-identity, and the importance of decolonizing clinical assessment and interventions for Aboriginal children in foster care.



**Dan Mitchell**  
**CEO Aboriginal  
Family Support  
Service, SA**

With over 20 years’ experience in the Out of Home Care and Social welfare sector throughout metro, regional and remote South Australia, both in Government and non-Government Agencies, Dan has worked as an Aboriginal Leader.

He is a strong advocate for Aboriginal equality and promoting the rights of children, young people and their families to have their lived experiences acknowledged and their voices heard and supported.

He is currently the Chief Executive at Aboriginal Family Support Services Ltd, South Australia’s largest ACCO.



**Facilitator:  
Dana Shen**  
**Aboriginal Cultural  
Consultant, SA**

Dana is Aboriginal/Chinese and a descendant of the Ngarrindjeri people in South Australia and has a passion for working with Aboriginal people and communities.

Dana has over 20 years’ experience working across the public and not for profit sectors in the areas of health, families and child protection.

She commenced her career as a Youth Community Development Officer in both the Adelaide Hills and the Murray Lands. In this role she worked with young people, many of whom were at risk, to create better environments for young people in their communities. Dana went on to work in a number of senior roles with the SA public sector in which she had responsibility for program management, service delivery, policy development and strategic planning and worked with The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) where she held the role of Principal, Social Services, Systems & Aboriginal Policy and Director of the Family by Family program.

Dana’s current work includes supporting organisations to plan for the future and elevating the voices of living experience to make service and systemic change.

In addition, Dana recently completed a two-year mindfulness meditation teacher’s course with Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach and is committed to making this accessible to organisations and communities in South Australia and bringing a strong First Nations and Ngarrindjeri lens to mindfulness practice.