



MEDIA RELEASE

## Another successful Sector Forum

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AbSec's latest Quarterly Sector Forum was held last week, with two days of discussion between 160 stakeholders from the Aboriginal child protection sector.

This time around the event was held in Tamworth, with AbSec CEO John Leha among many who travelled there.

"It's very important to host events like this in regional areas," Mr Leha says.

"It's a reminder of the vast scope of the work we all do. Whether somebody operates in Redfern or Penrith or the South Coast or the Outback, their work and decisions have implications for children and young people across the entire state."

The theme for this Sector Forum was "Community-led, family-focussed".

"Community-led refers to our strong desire to have Aboriginal people involved in the planning process for child protection structures," Mr Leha says.

"Family-focussed refers to the fact that family is at the very heart of the Aboriginal culture, while reminding all of us who work in the sector that preserving and supporting those families is our core goal."

Highlights of the forum included a keynote address from a local 17-year-old about the needs of Aboriginal people like her own as they get ready to leave out-of-home care.

The moment she finished everybody in audience, including the Minister for Communities and Justice, were on their feet loudly applauding her strength, resilience and commitment to making the journey better for others.

Major workshops included the redesign of the family preservation system, the IPART Review of out-of-home care costs and an exploration of the ways access to housing is impacting child protection outcomes for Aboriginal families.

Another highlight was the chance to hear from Department of Communities and Justice leaders in the local district and ask some tough questions.

"It was a particularly successful forum, a great chance to catch up with the current state of the sector and set our agenda going forward," Mr Leha says.

"They're always such invigorating events, allowing us all to reunite with old friends and make new ones.

"Every time I walk away proud to be part of an exceptional group of people who are trying to effect positive change."



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